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THE CHRIST OF THE CROSS

TO MY WIFE

THE CHRIST OF THE CROSS

OR

The Death of Jesus Christ
in its relation to
Forgiveness and Judgment

BY

REV. J. GIBSON SMITH

St. Andrew's Church, Wellington, New Zealand

SECOND EDITION

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“The real difficulty for theories of the Atonement is one that has not been at all adequately recognised and met by Evangelical Theology. It is this : How can the suffering of Christ at the hands of sinful men—that act of surpassing unrighteousness—become, in any real sense, the supreme manifestation of God’s Righteousness in relation to sin ? Historically viewed, the Crucifixion of Christ was an enormous crime against God and His Righteousness, an unjust act from beginning to end ; how then can it become the supreme manifestation of that Righteousness of God which punishes sin ? This historical aspect of the Cross has been too greatly overlooked by our modern Theology, and hence, after the best theories of the Cross as the manifestation of God’s Righteousness and the expression of the divine sense of the evil and ill-desert of sin have been propounded, this ethical difficulty remains, and will again and again keep coming up in the mind, throwing doubt over our theories. How could that which was the crowning act of human unrighteousness pass over into the supreme manifestation of the Divine Righteousness ?”

W. L. WALKER,
The Spirit and the Incarnation,
pp. 134, 135.

PREFACE.

It may well seem inexcusable that a minister subject to all the disabilities of a colonial pastorate should attempt to deal, as is here done, with the high and difficult problems of the Cross. I have but one plea to offer. This book was written under compulsion. The single conviction that there had come into my possession truth which I dared not hide has proved stronger than the thousand arguments for silence. An ever deepening sense of the truthfulness and value of that view of the Cross of Christ to which I had been led constrained me first of all to deliver the essential ideas of this book in a series of lectures to the congregation with which I was then connected, and, secondly, to mould them into what is, I trust, the more coherent and intelligible form which they have attained in this volume. The same standpoint, however, has been maintained in the book as in the lectures. I have addressed myself throughout, not to the professional theologian, but to the thoughtful Christian layman whose faith in the Saviourhood of Christ has had to struggle with the doubts and perplexities engendered by erroneous methods of describing the Saviour's work. I trust this fact will be kept in view in judging of the fitness of the method adopted.

I have also to express my great indebtedness to my old friend and fellow-student, Rev. J. Macartney Wilson, B.D., of Highbury Presbyterian Church, London, for his unwearying kindness and invaluable assistance in seeing this volume through the press.

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THE CHRIST OF THE CROSS.

PART I.—CRITICAL

CHAPTER I.

THE NEED FOR DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM.

It is claimed by the Christian people that the Christian gospel is the greatest, most important, most precious message that this world has ever heard. It is a universal message, addressed to and most urgently required by all mankind. Faith in this message, and in the Christ whom it reveals, makes for every man all the difference between spiritual life and spiritual death.

And the essence of this great message is that Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, died upon the Cross of Calvary in order that, through His death, men might be saved from the spiritual death of which they stood in danger, and made partakers of eternal life. Wherever the Christian gospel goes it seeks to put men into this position of indebtedness to Christ—to make them feel that Christ is so transcendently their benefactor that they owe the life of their souls to His readiness to submit to death on their behalf.

Clearly, if this message be accepted by men as

true, then it is almost impossible that men should *not* become Christians. They must feel, as Paul puts it, "*constrained by the love of Christ,*"¹ so constrained that ever afterwards they must seek no longer to "live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them."

This great message, however, goes forth into a world which is not at all prepared to accept it as true—a world which has no natural desire to live for Christ—a world which loves sinful pleasures dearly, and is, as a rule, far more afraid of physical than of spiritual death—a world, therefore, which may be expected to repudiate its overwhelming obligation to Christ, and to deny that He has ever done anything on its behalf at all so great as the Christian people represent. As a matter of fact, the Christian message has had to encounter this hostility—this attempt at repudiation—all down the centuries, and is encountering it to this very day. It is greatly to be desired, therefore, that the Christian people should not only believe the great gospel message for themselves, but should also be able to vindicate it in the face of a hostile world, and drive it home with convincing power through all opposing fallacies and sophistries. It is greatly to be desired also that they should have as few joints in their own armour as possible; that they should not attempt to vindicate the gospel message unwisely; that they should not endeavour to hold untenable positions, and so make it easier for the enemies of the truth to find plausible grounds for their repudiations.

Now, in this vindication of the gospel message before a hostile world, what is the element of chief

¹ 2 Cor. v. 14.

importance? It is simply the full, clear, and bold proclamation of the truth. If a message be really true, then the more fully and clearly and boldly that message is declared, the more it will compel belief. Partial, obscure, or timid statement will obtain at the best but a wavering belief; most probably it will meet with complete rejection.

The full, clear story convinces, where the half-told story fails. To tell men that Christ has died for them, without having any valid or convincing explanation as to how His death has saved their lives, is to win but a partial acceptance for the gospel at the best, and, at the worst, to leave it liable to complete rejection. Along with the bare statement of the message there should go a reasonable explanation of the message. If a man who by nature is averse to Christ is to be led with all his heart to accept Christ, then along with the statement that Christ died for that man there ought to go an explanation which the man can understand, and which, in his conscience, he will feel to be true, of how Christ's death has availed to save his life.

Now, if this full and satisfying explanation of the manner in which the death of Jesus secured spiritual life for men is so desirable, we naturally ask: "Is this full and clear explanation available?" And when, seeking an answer to this question, we turn to the New Testament, we are at once struck with the fact that, to the writers of the New Testament, such a full and clear and convincing explanation *does* seem to have been available. These Christian men, filled with the Holy Spirit, speak and write as though they were not merely *convinced* of the fact, but were also able to *understand* the fact that

through the death of Christ sinful men were saved from death into life. They do not write as though they were dealing with an incomprehensible mystery. They are not oppressed with the sense of an insoluble problem. They give all the signs of possessing an intelligent, joyful comprehension of the truth which they declare. And they appear also to have been able to communicate their own sense of intelligent, joyful comprehension to those who accepted their message. In the New Testament we seem to see great, glorious, intelligible truth leaping and flashing from mind to mind and from soul to soul, and everywhere producing the sense of profound, abiding satisfaction, and deep, enduring devotion. It certainly does appear as though, in the days of the apostles, that full and satisfying explanation of the connection between the death of Christ and the bestowal of spiritual life upon sinful men which we have seen to be so desirable, was actually available. To the Christian people of that period the explanation was apparently clearly manifest.

But when we turn to our own time the contrast is amazing and disheartening. It does not appear as though the full and clear explanation of the Cross which was ever present to the minds of the apostles were available for the average Christian of the twentieth century. There are questions which do not appear to have troubled the minds of the New Testament writers which do perplex the minds of modern Christians. The New Testament tells us that "the Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many,"¹ but it does not seem to be disturbed by the modern inquirer's questions, "To

¹ Matt. xx. 28.

whom was this ransom paid?" and "How precisely did the paying of the ransom effect the deliverance of the captives?" The New Testament tells us: "The blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin,"¹ but it does not seem in the least conscious of the modern cry of perplexity, "But how can innocent blood, unjustly shed, be the means of cleansing sin?" Some cause apparently prevented these questions from becoming a difficulty to faith in the days of the apostles. But undoubtedly these questions do constitute a difficulty for faith in the twentieth century.

When we turn to the Christian theologians whose duty it is to unfold the scriptural message, to clear away from it the excrescences that may have gathered round it, and to utter it plainly in language intelligible to their own time; when we ask these theologians whether they have agreed upon a full and satisfying explanation of the problem, "How does Jesus by His death on the Cross secure spiritual life for all believers?" we do not find them able to answer with a clear and convincing affirmative. They are by no means agreed amongst themselves as to the explanation required. Many of them have rejected as being no longer valid, important elements of the explanation offered in bygone days, but none of these theologians have been able, so far, to offer in their turn an explanation which has commended itself to the Christian people generally. Many have clung to the old explanation and striven to free it from all unwarranted accretions, but none have succeeded in so freeing it as to win for their revised version the acceptance of the mass of those who have once rejected it.

¹ 1 John i. 7.

One school of theology pins its faith to the idea of expiation, and vehemently asserts that this is the very essence of the doctrine of the Cross. Another school will not hear of expiation on any terms, and regards the idea as the one great veil that has hidden for centuries the true significance of the Cross. Some theologians make strained and painful efforts to force new and not always legitimate meanings into the old words. Some return from their explorations into the mystery by which the subject appears to be surrounded, despairingly proclaiming that all is mystery—that no full and satisfying explanation can ever, from the very nature of the case, be given, and that it is sheer waste of time and effort to continue the search.

Thus the contrast between the feeling of the New Testament towards the great problem and the feeling of modern theology is probably the most remarkable feature of our modern religious life. From the New Testament an unbiassed reader would gather that the connection between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of sins was so plain and clear to any honest and simple soul, *that it needed no explanation whatsoever*—that it was as manifest as the connection between the rising of the sun and the flooding of the valleys with light. But from modern theology at the beginning of the twentieth century, the same observer would most probably gather that here was *the most insoluble and intractable of all the problems with which the mind of man has ever endeavoured to grapple*.

In the meantime, while this state of confusion and discord reigns in the theological headquarters, the evangelistic forces at the front are left very much

to themselves. The evangelistic movements of the Church in the recent past owe very little in the way of guidance or inspiration to the theologians of the Church. And in many ways these movements show the lack of such guidance and inspiration. Their fitful and spasmodic character—the not infrequent and always deleterious mixture of frivolous and even of comic elements with the grave and solemn themes of religion—the evanescence of the effects produced—the absence of any effect whatsoever on large classes of people—the repelling and alienation of many of the most serious-minded in the community, all these well-known features of recent evangelistic movements combine to prove how disastrous it is for the Christian cause when the theologians and the evangelists of the Church are not knit together by the firmest and closest of bonds.

It is little wonder that the feeling of many earnest Christians in regard to the Church is one of anxious despondency. They are like passengers on a great steamship, who know that on former voyages their vessel was wont to plough the waves with buoyant power, and speed victoriously forward on her course in spite of the most violent tempests, but who now feel that somehow her speed and power are reduced, somehow she is easily checked by a gale of moderate force, somehow, even in calm weather, she merely forges slowly ahead. They feel that this ought not so to be. They cannot tell precisely what is the matter. They surmise that the engines are not working as they used to do—that there is some great leak in the steam connections, or perhaps some huge mass of weed entangled in and clogging

the propeller. But whatever the cause of hindrance may be, they desire most earnestly that it may be speedily detected and removed, so that once again the great fabric with which they are so closely identified may speed onward with renewed and intensified power towards the haven of her desire.

It is for such Christian people that this book is written. It is a book which takes for granted that the great Christian message is true, which assumes that all believers *do* owe their spiritual life to the death of Jesus Christ, but which tries to show wherein the explanations given of this great truth in the past are seriously defective, and endeavours to set the problem in a clearer and fuller light—more accordant with the teaching of Scripture—more satisfying to the reason and conscience of man, and therefore more capable of commending the everlasting truth of the Cross to earnest and humble truth-seekers of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER II.

PRIMA FACIE CASE AGAINST THE EXPIATORY THEORY.

“CHRIST died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”¹ In every investigation a starting point must be found somewhere. We are in quest of the clearest, fullest, and most intelligible explanation that we can find of the connection between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of sins, and we begin by assuming the truth of this text. “Christ died for our sins.” The specific object that Jesus had in view in giving Himself up to the death of the Cross was to secure for all who should believe in Him the remission of sins. Without that death there could be no divine forgiveness for sinful men. We assume that that is the truth, and we desire, if possible, to understand why it is the truth.

First of all, what is the explanation of the problem of the Cross which has been generally accepted in the Christian Church in the past? The answer which an examination of the history of doctrine compels us to give is that there has been no such thing as a complete, definite, and thorough-going explanation which has been generally accepted in the past. In proportion as explanations of the Cross have attained to definiteness and completeness, in like proportion they have been accepted by the few. It is only by consenting to receive as explanations those accounts of the Cross which have

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 3.

been vague and indefinite, and left many important questions unanswered, that we can find any explanations whatsoever entitled to be described as "generally accepted." When, however, we *do* make this allowance, then we find that there *has* been an explanation of the Cross which rightly and pre-eminently deserves to be described as having been "generally accepted." That is the explanation which begins by affirming that Christ died "to satisfy divine justice." Manifestly, in themselves, these words do not furnish an explanation of the Cross. They simply provide the framework on which an explanation may possibly be constructed. Before the explanation can be regarded as complete it has to be shown that a satisfaction of divine justice was required as an indispensable preliminary to divine forgiveness. It has further to be shown how Jesus in dying came under the sweep of divine justice. It has then to be demonstrated how that which Jesus endured in His death so met the requirements of divine justice as to make the forgiveness of sins possible to believers. Now Christian theologians who have all agreed in accepting the original statement that Christ died to satisfy divine justice, yet have wonderfully differed from each other when they came to fulfil these three requirements of a satisfying explanation. They have constructed the most diverse erections on this common foundation.

Here, however, it must be pointed out that the word "justice" may be used in two very different senses. In its wider application it is simply a synonym for "righteousness." As applied to God, it denotes that in God which impels Him

always to will and to do the right in every conceivable variation of circumstances. In this sense it is possible to speak of God as showing Himself "just" even in forgiving sins, as in 1 John i. 9. Indeed, it is in this wider sense of the word that "justice" is commonly used in the Scriptures. Now no believer who accepts Christ as his Saviour from sin can possibly object to the statement that Jesus, through His death, fulfilled and satisfied the ends of divine justice in this sense of the word "justice." Such a statement is simply equivalent to the assertion that Jesus through His death enabled God to deal righteously with the sinful world. In the English language, however, the tendency has been to narrow the signification of the word down to one particular form of righteousness, that, namely, which is manifested in strict adherence to the requirements of legality, the bestowing of fitting rewards on the obedient, the infliction of proper penalties on the disobedient. This narrower sense of the word is commonly marked by the use of the adjective "retributive."

Now when it has been said that Christ died to satisfy divine justice, it has usually been in the narrower sense of the word that the expression has been used. The main idea has been that the sufferings of Christ on the Cross were required, and were accepted by God (according to some principle which has been very variously explained) in lieu of the penalties due to sinful men. The contention has been that it was because, and only because, Christ on the Cross endured sufferings which were in some way equivalent to or at least a sufficient substitute for the penalties which God otherwise would have

been compelled to inflict upon sinful men, that God was enabled to grant, and was justified in granting, forgiveness to those sinful men who became believers in Christ. Now this contention, long regnant in the Church, has in these modern times been challenged by an increasing number of Christian theologians as being by no means the satisfying, convincing, or scriptural explanation of the Cross which it has for so long professed to be. What valid grounds there are for this challenge we must now endeavour to ascertain.

Various objections have been levelled against the "satisfaction to justice" or "expiatory" explanation of the Cross, with the view of showing that there is no essential connection at all between the Cross and the forgiveness of sins. With such objections we are not here concerned. We have assumed as our starting point that "Christ died for our sins"—that there is no forgiveness for men apart from the Cross of Christ.

But there is a great difference between saying that "Christ died for our sins." and saying that "Christ, in dying, satisfied divine retributive justice, and so, in this precise manner, secured our forgiveness." The one statement is clearly expressed in Scripture. The other is admittedly a theological hypothesis adopted to explain the language of Scripture.

Now it is possible that that hypothesis, however firmly it may seem to be supported by Scripture, may not after all be the true hypothesis. It is possible that the hypothesis may have been adopted without close enough scrutiny. We know that a previous hypothesis, namely that the death of

Christ was a ransom paid to Satan, was too hastily adopted by the Church, and though widely accepted and held for centuries, had in course of time to be discarded. There is nothing in the nature of things impossible in supposing that the "satisfaction to justice" hypothesis may have to be treated in a similar fashion. At any rate, when grave doubts as to its validity are expressed in public by eminent and responsible Christian theologians we have a clear call given to us to examine into the question.

Naturally, then, we ask, "Is there anything in the Scriptures that is opposed to the satisfaction to justice theory?" When we turn to our Bibles for the answer to this question, we find that there are large tracts of Scripture which at least *seem* to be opposed to the theory.

First of all, we observe that in the Scriptures the redemption wrought by Christ is so proclaimed as to *leave room for and to be continually associated with the idea of a great day of Judgment, or satisfaction to retributive justice, in the future.* The apostles at Pentecost, after the Crucifixion of Christ, exhorted the people, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."¹ Peter, in his first evangelistic address, quotes from the Old Testament, "Every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people,"² and at Caesarea, dealing with Cornelius, announces that he is charged by Christ to testify that "this is He which is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead."³ Paul, addressing the Athenians on Mars Hill, makes it the very essence of his message that "now God com-

¹ Acts ii. 40. ² Acts iii. 23. ³ Acts x. 42.

mandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He hath ordained.”¹ And so in many other portions of the New Testament. Now it does not appear from these passages that God’s retributive justice was “satisfied” on the Cross. It rather appears as though these passages made the holding of such an idea impossible. They seem to indicate that the utter hatefulness of sin to God had, through the Cross, been so made manifest in the sight of men that any further continuance in sin on the part of men was certain to bring down upon their heads in greater force than ever the still unsatisfied retributive justice of God. We may put the difficulty thus: If on the Cross God’s retributive justice was satisfied, then either it was wholly satisfied or it was not. If it was *not* wholly satisfied, then Christ failed to perform what, according to the hypothesis, was the very essence of His saving work. If it *was* wholly satisfied, then where was the room for a coming Judgment? why should that in God which had, once for all, been wholly satisfied need to be satisfied again?

Then, in the second place, the “satisfaction to justice” theory seems to be opposed by the *whole scriptural account of the crucifixion*. The Scriptures do not describe the crucifixion of Jesus in such a way as to lead us by plain, direct inference to the conclusion that here the justice of God is being satisfied. On the contrary, they describe it so that the plain, direct inference we draw is that here is the crowning injustice of the world being perpetrated. It is a deed at which all good men must

¹ Acts xvii. 30, 31.

gaze in horror. It is a deed which they would naturally expect to be a horror to God the Father also. There is only one element in the scriptural account that seems to be at variance with this impression, namely the cry of desertion on the Cross. Apart from that feature, there is nothing whatever in the scriptural narrative that suggests a satisfaction of any kind of justice, not to speak of the most holy justice of God. The sentence under which the Lord is condemned is wicked. The men who pronounce that sentence and the men who execute it are wicked men—betrayers and murderers—not the men whom we should expect the most holy God to choose for the execution of a sentence involving the satisfaction of His justice. If, in spite of these difficulties, we still hold that Christ, in dying at the hands of the wicked men, did satisfy the justice of God, and thus furnished that expiation for sins without which divine forgiveness is assumed to be impossible, then the problem we are confronted with is this: “If the Cross was needed as an expiation for sins, *what is to expiate the crime of the Cross?*” Jesus Himself has told us that Satan does not cast out Satan, yet it would appear here as though he did. “God,” we are told, “cannot forgive without His justice being satisfied,” and yet apparently His justice cannot be satisfied unless another and still greater injustice—the greatest of all injustices—is committed, namely the judicial murder of the stainless Christ. It would seem, therefore, as though God were put by this theory into the position of saying to the world of sinful men, “I cannot forgive your sins without a satisfaction to justice. *But if you will commit a greater sin than you have*

ever committed before, then my justice will be satisfied, and I will be able to extend forgiveness to you." The "satisfaction to justice" theory has thus to reckon with the fact that in the Scriptures the crucifixion of Christ is unflinchingly described as a terrible and appalling *crime*, and has to face the problem, "How can a deed involving such criminality be construed into a satisfaction of divine retributive justice?"

Thirdly, the expiatory theory seems to be opposed by the many passages of Scripture which *assert the indestructible unity of the Father and the Son*. "I and the Father are one."¹ "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."² Thus Jesus speaks of Himself, and in so doing, claims that God the Father, and He the Son, are one in spirit, in aim, and character. But there always comes a point in the exposition of the expiatory theory of the Cross, when either this unity seems to be broken in order to assign to the Father the real character and action of the stern, inflexible, righteous Judge and to the Son the real character and experience of the condemned sinner, or else, if this be shrunk from, the theory seems to resolve itself into a mere fiction, and God the Father is seen merely *making believe* to pour forth his wrath against Sin upon His well-beloved Son. If the *unity* of the Father and Son is preserved, it seems to be at the expense of the *theory*. If the *theory* is consistently developed, it seems to be at the expense of the *unity*.

Fourthly, the expiatory theory seems to be opposed by the many passages of Scripture which speak of the forgiveness bestowed on believers as the result of the redemptive work of Christ, *as a*

¹ John x. 30. ² John xiv. 9.

genuine gift of God's free grace. "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."¹ The expiatory theory, as a matter of course, gives the name of free grace to the pardon which it describes as being offered to men, but it leaves it open to doubt whether there is real free grace behind the offered pardon. For if God's justice has been satisfied on the Cross, if the full penalty of sin, or something equivalent thereto, has already been paid, then where is there room for forgiveness left? Is not this to rob God's forgiveness of all the characteristics of a true forgiveness? Is not this practically to affirm that God is incapable of showing real mercy at all? Is not this to bring in legalism by the back entrance, at the very moment that it is being ostentatiously disclaimed at the front door? If, at the very moment that God's forgiveness is proffered to and urged upon a sinful man, he is also strongly exhorted to recognise that that forgiveness never could have been offered to him unless first the penalty of his sins or its equivalent had been paid by another, may not the sinner very justly answer, "You may call this forgiveness if you please, but it does not seem forgiveness to me. It seems to be a kind of formal warrant, duly signed and sealed, ordering my release from prison. But according to this warrant I am not released because I am forgiven. I am released because *there is no need of forgiveness*. It appears to be a matter of indifference whether I truly repent of my sins or not, or whether I have a genuine faith in God or not. All the faith I need to have is simply the faith that this warrant for my release is valid. It is not mercy that has thus dealt with me.

¹ Rom. vi. 23.

Neither is it justice. It is some strange hybrid between mercy and justice which I cannot understand." This difficulty is not met by pointing out that it is God Himself who provides both the order of release and also the substitute who made the issuing of the order possible. The objection here is not that, according to the expiatory theory, it is some one other than God who acts in saving men, or that God's action has not involved Him in much cost and suffering. The objection is that while God is proclaimed to be saving men by showing mercy, an examination of His action, as described by the expiatory theory, reveals that He is not showing true mercy at all, but only such an exclusive regard for the claims of retributive justice as makes a real exhibition of free, gracious mercy impossible. And that objection is grounded on the position that the sin that is punished cannot, in the nature of things, be pardoned, and the sin that is pardoned cannot, in the nature of things, be punished.

Fifthly, the "satisfaction to justice" theory seems to be in opposition to those passages of Scripture which assert that *God's mercy is, in itself, holy and right*. "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; Thy faithfulness reacheth into the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; Thy judgments are a great deep."¹ There is no hint here that God's mercy needs to lean upon any of His other attributes for its justification. All the characteristics of God are placed upon the same footing as being equally worthy of devout and reverent admiration. And it is so all through the Scriptures. Everywhere God's mercy is spoken of as being in itself holy, capable of finding for itself its

¹ Ps. xxxvi, 5, 6.

own guarantees of purity. From the human point of view God's justice is equally open to hostile criticism with His mercy. Men are just as likely to think falsely that God's justice is unworthily harsh and cruel, as they are to think falsely that God's mercy is unduly lax and indulgent. There is every whit as much reason, therefore, why God, in His dealings with men, should seek to guard His justice from misconstruction, as there is reason why He should seek to guard His mercy; and the Scriptures represent God as doing this in both cases. But the Scriptures never represent God as calling upon one of His excellencies to supply defects in another, calling upon His mercy to supplement His justice, or His justice to fill up what is lacking in His mercy. The Scriptures represent God as "righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works"¹—holy and righteous in His execution of justice—never unduly harsh, never cruel or arbitrary, and equally holy and righteous in His bestowal of mercy—never merely lax or indulgent—always demanding and finding the guarantees of a holy bestowal of mercy. But the "satisfaction to justice" theory of the Cross seems to have involved in its very essence, lying at its very foundation, a mistrust of the holiness of God's mercy. It seems to be afraid lest God should be found liable to err in granting forgiveness in the same way that men, in their bestowals of forgiveness, do frequently and lamentably err—that is, by undue laxity or by undue vindictiveness. It seems to be convicted of that unworthy fear, not because it represents God, at tremendous cost, seeking to secure that His mercy, while freely and abundantly

¹ Ps. cxlv. 17.

bestowed, shall yet be kept always pure and holy, but because it represents God, in so doing, as passing beyond the realm of mercy altogether, and by a kind of *tour de force* dragging the safeguards of His mercy from out of the realm of retributive justice.

We have thus seen that when we interrogate the Scriptures as to whether theologians were acting wisely and rightly in amplifying the simple scriptural statement "Christ died for our sins" into the fuller affirmation that "Christ, in dying, satisfied divine retributive justice," five great Scripture truths are found apparently arrayed in opposition to this explanation of the Cross. It is as though five august and reverend witnesses were to come forward and testify that this supposed truth is an alien and intruder.

The Truth of the Coming Judgment seems to say : " My sacred function is to awake the souls of men to godly fear and trembling awe in view of the great coming Day when God shall deal finally with human sin ; but I cannot do my work aright, I can gain no proper hearing in the consciences of men because of this intruder who leads men to believe that God's justice has *already* been satisfied, and His wrath against sin *already* expressed to the full."

And the Truth of the Crime of the Crucifixion proclaims : " It is my sacred duty to enable men to know the exceeding sinfulness of sin—to make them join heartily with God in regarding sin as worthy of death—to awaken shuddering horror in their hearts against all manifestations of sin whatsoever, but I cannot perform my task aright because of this intruder who leads men to believe that those who

crucified Christ, instead of being the perpetrators of the crowning Sin of the world, a sin unutterably hateful to God, were the instruments chosen by God for the infliction of a righteous penalty which was acceptable to Him and with which His justice was satisfied."

And the Truth of the Unity of the Father and the Son declares: "It is my high and holy office to give religious validity and weight and meaning to all the words and deeds and experiences of Jesus of Nazareth, by showing Him to be so perfectly united with the Father that it may truthfully be said, 'He that hath seen Jesus has seen the Father.' Thus do I strive to make the Gospel of Christ a living power among men of all ages and nations. But I cannot do my work aright because of this intruder who leads men to believe either that Jesus is not truly the Son of the Father or that God is not truly the Father of Jesus, by ascribing to both experiences which are utterly incompatible with the relationship of a perfectly holy and loving Father to a perfectly holy and loving Son."

And the Truth of God's Free Grace adds the testimony: "It is my glorious and blessed mission to meet penitent and earnest souls, souls groaning under the bondage of sin, and smarting from the pangs of a guilty conscience, with glad tidings of great joy—to whisper to their hearts a message so rich and tender and true, that if they can receive it it will bow them down at the feet of their Saviour in a passion and rapture of adoring gratitude. But alas! I cannot do my work aright because of this intruder, who has gained the ears of men and teaches them to believe that the free forgiveness of

God is not the divinest, noblest, tenderest of all forgivenesses, but is a cold and formal legal thing, with all the elements of genuine mercy evaporated out of it."

And the Truth of God's Holy Mercy closes the indictment: "It is mine to vindicate the mercy of God in the Cross. It is mine to defend it against those who would abuse, or pervert, or dishonour it. It is mine to explain its reasonableness to those who misunderstand or calumniate it. And what it is mine to do, that I can do. But I am hindered in my work by this intruder who has usurped my task. He professes to defend the grace of God in Christ from abuse and dishonour, and yet the more he bestirs himself the more the gospel tends, in his hands, to become a lifeless, formal thing—a weariness and a disappointment to the earnest—a confusion and a chaos to the lover of truth—an object of contempt or indifference to the worldly-minded. And this is so because the intruder speaks without authority. He has ventured into a sphere where he has no rightful standing. It is only the Truth of God's Holy Mercy that can defend and vindicate God's mercy in the Cross. But this intruder and usurper, with his confusions and his fictions, makes it hard indeed for men to behold God's mercy as it really is—infinately tender and warm and personal, and yet infinitely pure and holy and true."

Here then is what seems to be a strong and weighty indictment of the expiatory theory of the Cross—an indictment which accuses that theory of being an unauthorised and incompetent defender of the Christian faith, an indictment which draws its strength, not from sceptical rationalism, but

from the Scriptures themselves. If the expiatory theory claims to be able to explain some portions of the Scriptures, it is also clear that there are other large and important tracts of Scripture to which it seems to stand in direct opposition. There is, therefore, a "prima facie" case against it.

It may be, however, that the case is only "prima facie." It may be that these difficulties can all be satisfactorily explained. The "satisfaction to justice" theory has been before the Church in some form or other since the year 1098, when Anselm wrote his *Cur Deus Homo*. Gleams and glimpses of it are visible before that, even as far back as the time of Origen, but it is beyond all question that it held no general sway in the Church till after Anselm had written his book. Beyond all question it had to oust the Satanic-ransom theory before it could find a footing for itself. Anselm's theory was attacked by Bernard in the interests of the then current and orthodox Satanic-ransom theory. We may say then that the "satisfaction to justice" theory of the Cross did not receive general acceptance in the Church until more than a thousand years after the crucifixion had elapsed, but once having been received, it has held the field for over eight hundred years. Roughly speaking, it was in possession four hundred years before the Reformation, and has remained in possession other four hundred years since the Reformation. Although it thus took its rise as a practically effective explanation of the Cross right in the midst of Roman Catholicism, it was not rejected by the Reformers. The Reformers considerably modified the theory, but they did not reject its essential features. They

and their descendants have endeavoured during these four hundred years to harmonise it with Scripture and reason and conscience, and therefore, before we pronounce any decided opinion, we must first ask how it has fared with these efforts to vindicate the expiatory theory of the Cross. It may be that as we pursue this inquiry we shall find the difficulties already mentioned vanishing away. Or it may be that we shall find them becoming intensified. In any case, our one clear duty is to find and utter the truth, so far as in us lies.

CHAPTER III.

THE HISTORY OF THE EXPIATORY THEORY.

HAVE the theologians of the Christian Church, who have adopted that expiatory theory of the Cross which was first made current in the Church by Anselm of Canterbury in the year 1098, been able to meet satisfactorily the objections to which that theory is exposed, and succeeded in reconciling it with Scripture and reason and conscience? This is the question we must now attempt to answer.

First of all, what precisely was the teaching of Anselm himself? In Anselm's book, God is conceived of as a great, austere, majestic King, and sin is supposed to consist simply in failing to render to this King the honour due to His majesty. Before God can forgive the sin which offends His majesty it is necessary, Anselm holds, that some reparation should be made for the dishonour done Him. Sinful man cannot offer such reparation himself, for all the obedience he renders after he has sinned is no more than is already due to God. And yet the reparation, if offered at all, must be offered by man, or else it is of no avail. Therefore the Son of God becomes man. But even from the God-man obedience is due to God. Where then is the reparation to come from? It comes from the suffering and death of the God-man. That was

not due to God. That was something over and above the obedience properly required of the God-man. So Christ, by suffering and dying, when He was not *required* to suffer and die, manifested an infinite nobleness which God had to reward, or, as the later Schoolmen put it, accumulated an infinite fund of merit, which He offered to offended God on behalf of sinful men. God's injured honour is thereby repaired, and thus whenever a sinner asks for forgiveness God, by drawing, so to speak, on the infinite fund of merit provided on behalf of the sinner by the God-man, is able to grant forgiveness without compromising His dignity.

Such is a brief sketch of the Anselmic explanation of the Cross. Now it is possible to admit that this theory may perhaps adumbrate in outline the true explanation, even as the shadow of a man may reveal the true outline of the man's figure. In so far as Anselm's theory suggests that there is an obstacle to man's forgiveness in God, as well as in man, and that man himself could never remove that obstacle, and that Christ has come and removed the otherwise insurmountable difficulty, and thus made men indebted to Him as to an altogether indispensable Saviour, in so far Anselm's theory accords with Scripture teaching. But when we seek to look into the details, we find only blank impossibilities and contradictions, just as when looking at a man's shadow we quite fail to discern the lineaments of his features, but perceive instead only a blur of darkness.

Thus, according to Anselm, the obstacle to man's forgiveness lies in the offended honour of God. It is God's personal dignity that is so injured by sin

that God cannot forgive until reparation is offered. Let us turn to our Bibles. Is it so that the Scriptures represent God? Do they show Him waiting in offended majesty for some reparation to be made to His dignity? They do not. They show us rather a God possessed of such a character that we may say with the utmost assurance, "Whatever else may have been the obstacle that stood in the way of man's forgiveness, it could never have been this." The Scriptures do not say that God was so offended by human sin that He could do nothing to save mankind until Christ came and appeased His wounded dignity. The Scriptures say, "God—God the Father—so loved the world—the sinful world—that He—the Father—gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish."¹ The Scriptures say that the purpose of saving mankind originated in God the Father. Anselm, without intending to do so, makes that purpose originate in God the Son. Anselm never sees, yet it is perfectly true, that if God had been such a God as he describes, then the Son could never have come to our world on a mission of redemption at all. If God's sense of injured honour had been the real difficulty that Anselm supposes, then it must have been real enough and strong enough to prevent God from taking any step whatever towards the salvation of the world.

Having gone thus astray at the beginning, Anselm necessarily goes further and further astray as he proceeds. In order to get his theory to work he has to make provision for the establishment of an unlimited fund of superfluous merit which may be drawn upon to make up for the deficit in honour to

¹ John iii. 16.

God caused by the accumulated sins of all mankind. How does he obtain this unlimited fund of superfluous merit? By supposing a distinction between Christ's active and Christ's passive obedience. The active obedience was rightfully due to God. The passive obedience—the obedience which led Jesus to submit to suffering and death—was not due to God. And this passive obedience which was *not* due to God, being the superfluous obedience of an infinite person, furnished the unlimited fund of merit required.

Now where does Anselm get this extraordinary idea of an obedience on the part of Christ which was not required of Him by God the Father? Certainly not from the Scriptures. Read the account of the agony in Gethsemane. Remember the words, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." Here was the cup of suffering and of death at the very lips of Jesus. Was it not the Father who required of the Son that He should drink it? Was the Son's obedience then superfluous? Could He have declined to obey and still have remained the perfectly loyal Son? Assuredly He could not. It was in that very experience that He most of all obeyed the Father's will. It is true that the Father never required any obedience from the Son which the Son did not render. It is equally true that the Son never rendered any obedience which the Father did not require. There was, therefore, no superfluous obedience on the part of Jesus, and the notion of an unlimited fund of superfluous merit available for being set over against the sins of men in the ledgers of Heaven disappears as an airy, insubstan-

tial dream. And surely it is well that it should do so. For if the Father does *not* require the Son to suffer and die, while yet this suffering and death are necessary for our salvation, what does it mean? It means that the Father is *utterly indifferent whether we are saved or not*. A preacher may shout himself hoarse in proclaiming that God loves all mankind, but his preaching must needs be futile if it is uttered under a theory which, when probed to the bottom, is found to involve the inference that God has no real concern whatever in their salvation.

But even supposing this unlimited fund of merit remained intact, of what use could it be to sinful men? Can merit and guilt be transferred from one moral being to another in the same way that money can? Anselm, indeed, seems to have felt no difficulty about the matter. He lived in an age which had no adequate conception of the real nature of sin. He wrote his book four centuries before Luther fulminated against papal indulgences bought for money. He saw sin for the most part merely in its outward effects. He takes no account of its inward results. For him the evil of sin consists wholly in the external penalty it involves. The spiritual degradation entailed by it escapes his observation.

And so to Anselm it seemed an easy thing, once his unlimited fund of superfluous merit was established, to arrange for its distribution among sinful men, and if it so happened that he was led also to believe that that distribution could only be carried out through the agency of the officials of his own Church, we cannot blame him. But subsequent

generations came to see that there was a tremendous difficulty here. The question gradually rose up before their minds: "Is any transference of merit or guilt from one moral being to another possible in the nature of things? If it is not, then what is the use of any unlimited fund of superfluous merit?"

It was here especially that the Reformers felt the weakness of Anselm's theory, and it was here especially that they sought to strengthen it.

It was inevitable, indeed, that in taking over Anselm's theory the Reformers should modify it, for their ideas of God and law and sin and grace were far more profound and true than Anselm's were. They did modify it, and it is these modifications that we are now to trace.

To attempt such a task in detail is, of course, impracticable. All that is possible, and all that is really necessary for our purpose, is to exhibit the most important changes that the theory has undergone within the Protestant Church. These changes can best be shown in connection with the varying answers given to this question: "*If Christ died to satisfy divine justice, then did He, in dying, endure the wrath of God the Father?*"

There is no hint of such a question in Anselm himself. It never once occurred to him to suppose that Jesus endured the Father's wrath. His idea is simply this, that Jesus did a most noble thing in dying at the hands of wicked men when dying was not required of Him, and therefore God rewarded Him by giving Him the souls of believers as His possession. It was Christ's illimitable nobleness, being exhibited within humanity, which enabled

God to forgive humanity's baseness. But the resemblance between divine grace and human money, on which Anselm's theory so greatly depended, was increasingly felt to be insufficient. Merit is essentially different from money. It cannot be transferred from one moral being to another in the same easy fashion that a sum of money can. It was inevitable, therefore, that as men came to feel that to pay back the money that a thief has stolen does not make the thief any less of a thief or in any degree more forgivable than he was before, they should have to face this question: "If, because of Christ's death and my faith in Him, His righteousness is transferred to me, and my sin is transferred to Him, then, to make the transaction ethically valid, must not Christ have endured exactly what I would have had to endure had I not been forgiven? But if I had not been forgiven, then I should have had to endure the wrath of God. Must not Christ, therefore, on the Cross have endured the wrath of God?" That question was bound to be raised and to call for an answer. It was raised, and the theologians of the Protestant Church have tried to find the true answer. What has that answer been?

First of all, let us set before our minds a general outline of the changes that have taken place in Protestant theology in connection with the asking and answering of this question. There are four distinct stages of which we have to take account.

1st.—During the Reformation stage, the question has not yet definitely arisen. The main question before the Reformers was a different one from this. It was, "Is it faith *alone* that justifies?" not "*Why* does faith in the crucified Christ justify the

sinner?" We can, however, in this stage see the deeper question coming. We can see that it has to come, but we see also that during the first period of the Reformation the question is merely struggling to utter itself. It is nowhere definitely and clearly considered.

2nd.—During what we may call the sub-Reformation period the problem comes clearly forward. The question is deliberately considered, "Did Christ, in dying, endure the wrath of God?" and the answer is given, "Yes, He must have done so."

3rd.—During the post-Reformation period the question receives an answer which is professedly affirmative, but is in reality negative. It is an attempt to say "Yes" and "No" in the same breath.

4th.—During our own time we have some theologians who say "Yes" and some "No," and some who say "Yes" and "No," and some who are utterly silent, and some who affirm that the question ought never to have been raised at all since it proceeds upon an entirely wrong assumption.

On the Reformation period we need not dwell. Neither Luther nor Calvin affirms that Christ endured the moral wrath of God. Luther, in one loosely rhetorical passage, says that the "law" set upon Christ and "killed" Him, while Calvin, definitely rejecting the statement that God was "angry with Christ," yet says that Jesus "sustained the gravity of the divine severity." What precisely the difference may be between "enduring the wrath of God" and "sustaining the gravity of divine severity," or "experiencing all the signs of

an angry and punishing God," Calvin does not tell us. It is characteristic of this whole Reformation period that the question of whether Christ on the Cross did or did not endure the wrath of God only comes into sight. It is nowhere adequately discussed.

Coming now to the sub-Reformation period, about a century after Luther, we find the struggling question at last getting itself definitely uttered. Thus Paul Gerhard (1606—1676) inquires: "How would Christ have really taken our sins upon Himself and offered a complete satisfaction, unless He had really felt the wrath of God, which is by an indissoluble bond connected with sins? How would He have redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, unless He had endured the judgment of the angry God?"¹ It has been pointed out by Dr. Horton that this statement was characterised by Bellarmine, a contemporary Roman Catholic theologian, as "an unheard of heresy." As a matter of fact, however, Paul Gerhard's idea, though it was widely held, and still remains to this day the belief of many Protestants, proved to be too awful and appalling for many theologians of the post-Reformation Protestant Church. Not a few of these have thought it possible to answer the question "Did Christ endure the wrath of God?" by answering "Yes" and "No" in one breath. This they have done by dividing God's wrath into two parts, consisting, on the one hand, of His *feeling* of moral indignation, and on the other of the *penalties* which that feeling leads Him to inflict, just as we might distinguish between the anger which prompts a blow and the

¹ *Loci Theologici*, xvii. 2, c. 54.

blow itself. Then they have affirmed that God merely *imputes* His feeling of indignation to Christ, while He *actually inflicts* upon Him the penalty of death. And if we ask what these theologians mean by "imputation," here is what John Owen, one of the great Puritans, says: "No imputation accounts those unto whom anything is imputed to have themselves done the things which are imputed to them. That were not to impute, but to err in judgment. It is therefore a manifest mistake of their own which some persons make the ground of a charge against the doctrine of imputation. For they say, 'If our sins were imputed to Christ, then must He be esteemed to have done what we have done amiss, and so be the greatest sinner that ever was;' and on the other side, 'If His righteousness be imputed to us, then are we esteemed to have done what He did, and so stand in no need of the pardon of sin.' But this is against the nature of imputation, which proceeds on no such judgment, but on the contrary, judgment that we ourselves have done nothing of what is imputed to us, nor Christ anything of what is imputed to Him."¹

Now, beyond a doubt, there is a doctrine of imputation taught in the Scriptures. There *has* to be, if the God of all holiness is to have any gracious dealings with sinful men. But equally, beyond a doubt, this of Owen's is *not* the scriptural doctrine of imputation. The Scripture doctrine deals with possibilities that will by and by become actualities, and which, in the sight of Him who is the Alpha and the Omega, are as good as actualities already. But Owen's doctrine deals with impossibilities — with assumptions that are eternally unrealisable,

¹ *Owen's Works* (Goold's ed.), v, 168, 169.

and in plain language amounts to just this, that God, though He knows better, makes believe that He sees the sins of sinful men in the sinless Christ.

Behind such a flimsy fiction as this, not a few of later Protestant theologians have sought refuge from the horror of having to affirm that the moral indignation of God was really poured out on the head of His only begotten Son. Thus Dr. Hodge, from behind this shelter, boldly exclaims: "Is there anyone who has the hardihood to charge the whole Calvinistic world who teach or preach the doctrine of imputation with believing that Christ personally or properly committed the sins which are said to be imputed to Him? or that the moral turpitude of these sins was transferred to Him? or that He ever repented of our sins? If this is imputation, if this transfer of moral character is included in it, we have not words to express our deep abhorrence of the doctrine."¹

And Dr. Crawford, one of the ablest of latter-day writers on the problem of the Cross, after quoting with approval these words from Dr. Hodge, adds for himself: "Jesus became liable to the penalties which our sins had justly incurred, in order that we, through His substitution, might be exempted from them. But even in the lowest depths of His humiliation, and in the bitterest agonies of His endurance, He was, alike in His own consciousness and in the judgment of Heaven, the Holy One of God, unspotted and without blemish."²

So then later Protestant theology repudiates with abhorrence the idea that the wrath of God fell upon Jesus Christ in the sense in which any ordinary, plain-English-speaking man would understand the

¹ *Princeton Theological Essays*, First Series, p. 121.

² *The Atonement*, p. 426.

term. It says emphatically, through such theologians as Dr. Hodge and Dr. Crawford, that Jesus, being utterly sinless, could never be the real object of the real moral anger of God. It could never teach such appalling doctrine as that. But after saying "No" thus boldly, it proceeds to try to say "Yes" again. It says that though this statement be true, though the wrath of God could not really fall upon Jesus, yet there was a sense in which the wrath of God did fall upon Jesus. It fell upon Jesus in this sense, that the moral turpitude of sin was imputed to Him, and the penalty of sin—death—was actually inflicted upon Him. Now we have already seen what this kind of imputation means. It means simply "making believe." And what does "*endurance of penalty*" mean, when we take away all real moral indignation from behind it? It means simply "*endurance of hardship*," and nothing more.

Suppose someone were to say to us, "Luther was shut up in the gloomy Castle of Wartburg for a year for simply telling the truth to the Pope." "Ah," we reply, "how very cruel and unjust of the Pope to imprison poor Luther in that fashion." "Ah, but," says the first speaker, "it was not the Pope at all who shut up Luther in the Castle. It was Luther's own friends who did this to save him from the Pope's hostility, and Luther himself was a consenting party." "Ah, then," we reply, "that alters the whole matter." Of course it alters the matter most profoundly. Alter the moral feeling behind an act, and you alter the whole character of the experience caused by the act. And so here. Take God's moral indignation from behind

the death of Jesus, and what ground remains for saying that Jesus in His death endured the penalty of sin? The most awful and terrible element in the penalty of sin is precisely the moral indignation of the All-holy God. It is the dread of that indignation more than anything else that fills the guilty conscience with trembling apprehension. To say that Jesus in His death endured God's punishment of sin, and yet to be compelled to leave out of that death *the most essential and vital element in the punishment of sin*, is surely a strange mode of satisfying justice.

It is such a very strange mode of satisfying justice that we are compelled to ask this question, "Where has the real holy anger of God, according to this explanation of the Cross, gone to?" Has it disappeared into space? Is there no real feeling of holy moral indignation against sin in God at all? We began with the assumption that before the sinner could be forgiven God's retributive justice must first be satisfied. We supposed that if God's justice were to be satisfied His holy indignation against sin must somehow be expressed. It is admitted that that feeling of holy indignation was not really expressed against Jesus, since he was utterly sinless. It is not expressed against the sinner, for he is pardoned. Where is it then? Where is the real, terrible, dreadful anger of God against sin? It is nowhere, according to this theory. It has evaporated. It certainly begins to appear as though, if this make-believe indignation and this shadow of a penalty (which are all that this type of the expiatory theory is able to fasten on to the experience of the sinless Christ) truthfully re-

present all the indignation against sin that there is in the heart of God, then *God is not so very indignant against sin, after all*. It begins to appear as though there may be a very close connection between the fact that such theology as this is reckoned orthodox and scriptural, and the other fact, generally admitted and deplored by all earnest Christians, that an adequate sense of sin seems to be dying out of the Christian Church of to-day. It begins to appear as though these two facts may be brought together in the relation of cause and effect. It begins to appear as though it might be that very expiatory theory of the Cross *which professes most ostentatiously to impress men with the sense of sin, which is itself working in exactly the contrary direction*, by leading men to believe that in reality, when they come to look right into the heart of things, they will find that *God has no genuine indignation against sin at all*.

It may have been through some consciousness of this danger that Dr. Denney, in 1894, was led to make the desperate effort that he did to withdraw the admission made by his predecessors that Christ did not really suffer the real anger of God, and to go as near as he dared towards maintaining the contrary. At any rate, here are some of the expressions used by Dr. Denney, in his *Studies in Theology*, published in that year: "In Christ's death, sinless as he was, *God's condemnation* of our sin came upon Him."¹ Dr. Denney will not say that God's *wrath* fell upon Christ, but again and again and again he says that God's *condemnation* did. "God," he says, "is presented dealing in an awful way with the awful reality of sin, for

¹ *Studies in Theology*, p. 112.

its removal; and the way in which He removes it is to lay it on His Son. That is done, not in anything else, but in this alone, that Christ, by God's appointment, *dies the sinner's death*. The *doom* falls upon Him, and is exhausted there."¹ And in summing up his position, he says again, "The Cross is the place at which the Sinless One dies the death of the sinful, the place at which *God's condemnation* is borne by the Innocent."² But this was printed in 1894. In 1903 Dr. Denney published another book called the *Death of Christ*. On page 160 of that volume we find these words: "Christ hung on the tree in obedience to the Father's will, fulfilling the purpose of the Father's love, doing a work with which the Father was well pleased, and on account of which the Father highly exalted Him; hence, to describe Him as *accursed of God would be absurd*."

So then, according to Dr. Denney, one of the most distinguished modern defenders of the expiatory theory, it is of the *very essence* of the Christian gospel to affirm that *God's condemnation falls upon Christ*, while at the same time it is the *height of absurdity* to say that *Christ is accursed of God*.

Truly it begins to appear as though the expiatory theory had fallen upon evil days. The objection that Dr. Denney here contradicts himself would not in all probability trouble Dr. Denney very much. There are times when he appears to revel in contradictions. Thus, "It is in these sharp, undisguised contradictions," he says, "it is in this tragic, appalling event, the Sinless One made sin by *God*—that the condemned soul recognises the

¹ *Studies in Theology*, p. 112.

² *Ib.*, p. 124.

very stamp and seal of a real work of atonement. That meeting of contradictions, that union of logical and moral opposites, is here the very guarantee of truth."¹ And yet just four pages earlier he has asserted that "the work of Christ in relation to sin is the culminating point in revelation; not the insoluble problem, but the solution of all problems. It ought to be of all things the *most luminous* and the most susceptible of *rational treatment*."² How "the condemned soul" that finds in the contradictions "the guarantee of truth" is to keep its faith when the contradictions, becoming luminous and intelligible, are at last resolved, *and there are no more contradictions to guarantee the truth*, Dr. Denney does not say.

No doubt Dr. Denney has some method satisfactory to himself of reconciling his own statements. But whether Dr. Denney contradicts himself or not, he has certainly succeeded in setting forth a presentation of the doctrine of the Cross which is utterly unpreachable. On page 127 of *Studies in Theology*, he says, "I do not hesitate to say that a doctrine of atonement which cannot be preached is not true. If it cannot be told out lucidly, unreservedly, passionately, tremblingly, by any simple man, to gentle and simple alike, it is not that word of the Cross which Paul describes as the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes." Dr. Denney cannot well object to have his own doctrine of atonement tried by his own standard. "To proclaim that Christ is condemned of God," he says, "is the essence of the gospel. To proclaim that Christ is accursed of God is the height of absurdity." According to Dr. Denney, therefore,

¹ *Studies in Theology*, p. III.

² *Ib.*, p. 107.

all that saves the glorious Gospel of Christ from at any moment resolving itself into sheer absurdity is the extremely narrow and, to most ordinary eyes, entirely imperceptible difference between the words "accursed" and "condemned." Very few English-speaking men could tell any difference whatsoever between being "accursed of God" and being "condemned of God." Imagine the Christian evangelist addressing his workaday audience in the street, and having continually to pull himself up to ask, "Did I tell these people that Christ was 'condemned of God,' or did I say that He was 'accursed of God'? I have to be so very careful, for Dr. Denney tells me that if I used the one phrase I was indeed proclaiming the very essence of the gospel, while if I used the other, which is as like to it as one grape in a cluster is to another, I was talking sheer absurdity."

Or imagine the Christian minister composing his sermon in his study and having to face such problems as these: "Dare I say, in explaining how Christ was 'condemned of God,' as Dr. Denney says He was, that God was 'angry with Christ,' or that Christ 'endured His Father's frown,' or that 'God felt aversion to Christ,' or that 'God showed disapprobation towards Christ'? How am I to know whether these are permissible terms? 'Christ condemned of God' is legitimate, 'Christ accursed of God' is illegitimate and absurd. So much I know, because Dr. Denney tells me so. And no doubt Dr. Denney knows why the one phrase is legitimate and the other is not. But I do not. I cannot form even the faintest conception as to why the one is the essence of the gospel and the other is

the essence of absurdity. What, then, am I to do? How am I to explain and illustrate and drive home the glorious message I am commissioned to preach?" There is simply nothing that such a minister could do except repeat Dr. Denney's very words, parrot fashion, to the end of his days. The moment he deviated from these words by a hair's-breadth he would run the risk either of failing to proclaim the essence of the gospel or else of turning the gospel into an utter absurdity. As for the rank and file of Christian people who have had no training in theological hair-splitting, words fail to describe the fearfulness of the responsibility they would be undertaking, if Dr. Denney is right, in attempting by themselves, in their own plain words, to explain the truth of the Cross to their neighbours, and the almost absolute certainty there would be that ninety-nine out of every hundred would teach absurdities instead of the truth. But a message so utterly self-contradictory is a message utterly incapable of being preached either by or to the common people, and therefore, according to Dr. Denney's own statement, it cannot be true.

CHAPTER IV.

IF NOT THE EXPIATORY THEORY, WHAT THEN?

FROM the history of the expiatory theory which has now been given it would appear that its upholders have been driven from one untenable refuge to another, and that nowhere have they found stable ground on which to rest. Either, like Anselm, they must blind themselves to the real nature of sin, forget its personal character, and deal with sin in the same easy way in which they would deal with a sum of money, or else, if they treat sin seriously, they must raise the question whether or not Christ, in making His satisfaction to retributive justice, endured the wrath of God. If they answer that question by saying "No," then they are left with nothing but the pretence of an explanation of why Christ's death should avail to take away sin. If they answer it by saying "Yes," then they are face to face with the horror of having to affirm that in the hour of His uttermost obedience the Father poured out on the Son the vials of His avenging wrath. If they answer it by saying "Yes and No," then their explanation ceases to be an explanation at all, and becomes a mass of intractable, incoherent contradiction.

Now when a theory treats its adherents in this fashion, when it keeps driving them backwards and forwards between intolerable unreality on the one

hand and unbearable horror on the other, when it keeps pushing them on between ever-narrowing walls of contradiction until it becomes difficult for them to open their lips without contradicting with the one breath what they have just uttered with the other, and finally, either compels them to announce that all is dark, impenetrable mystery, and that it is practically impossible to disclose to ordinary people any intelligible connection between the Cross of Christ and the forgiveness of sins, or else compels ordinary people to draw that conclusion for themselves—when a theory treats its adherents in this fashion, then, no matter what its antiquity may be, that theory has rendered itself suspect. Its very antiquity becomes one more count in the indictment. To have been so long in the field, to have had enlisted on its behalf for so many hundred years the services of so many earnest, learned, and true-hearted Christian men—and after all to have no better results to show than these—such facts, in themselves, point strongly to the conclusion that in this theory we have an alien and intruder among the august and harmonious company of Christian truths.

Now we are at perfect liberty to harbour the suspicions of the expiatory theory engendered by this inquiry into its nature and history, without feeling that in so doing we are endangering the saving virtue of the Cross or calling in question the Saviourhood of Jesus Christ. The remission of sins on the ground of the death of Christ was effectively preached in the world long before the expiatory theory was ever heard of, and may be effectively preached for centuries to come, when the

expiatory theory has been as completely abandoned as the Satanic-ransom theory now is. The truth of the Saviourhood of Jesus Christ does not rest on the expiatory theory of the Cross. It rests on the Scriptures and on the witness of the Holy Spirit in the consciences of believers. The expiatory theory is merely a theological attempt to explain the Saviourhood of Jesus Christ, and we have seen strong reasons for suspecting that it is an attempt which proceeds on wrong lines.

We may, therefore, agree very heartily with Dr. Denney when he says, "To preach the love of God out of relation to the death of Christ—or to preach the love of God in the death of Christ, but without being able to relate it to sin—or to preach the forgiveness of sins as the free gift of God's love, while the death of Christ has no special significance attached to it, is not, if the New Testament is the rule and standard of Christianity, to preach the gospel at all."¹ And yet, while cordially assenting to this statement, we may quite consistently refuse to acknowledge that the expiatory theory of the Cross is a true and accurate explanation of the connection which admittedly exists between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of sins.

As a matter of fact, many Christian theologians have definitely renounced the expiatory theory of the Cross as being a worthy or valid explanation of the problem which it endeavours to solve. Sometimes such renunciations have been accompanied by very extreme and untenable statements, as, for instance, that there is really no problem of the Cross at all, no vital connection whatsoever between the death of Christ and the forgiveness of sins, or the

¹ *Death of Christ*, p. 284.

equally inadmissible assertion that if there is such a connection it is, in the nature of things, incomprehensible, even in the slightest degree, by human powers of understanding. Fidelity to the Scriptures prevents us from entertaining either of these propositions. If the Scriptures are capable of proving anything at all, they prove, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that there is a most special and vital link of connection between the death of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins. Equally without a doubt the men who in the Scriptures announced this truth—the apostles and followers of the Lord—were not speaking blindly—not repeating by rote words which they themselves did not comprehend. They used words to express meaning, and that meaning was clear and intelligible to their own minds. And if the meaning of the words was clear and intelligible to them, then there can be no reason in the nature of things why the same words may not be clear and intelligible to us also, provided that the Holy Spirit of Truth has access to our natures as He had to theirs.

The theologians, however, who have taken up and held to these extreme positions have been few. Most of those who have renounced the expiatory theory have done so in favour of some other theory which they have brought forward in its stead. Amongst the more notable attempts which have thus been made to supplant the expiatory theory of the Cross are those of F. D. Maurice, Horace Bushnell, Dr. John Young, and Dr. McLeod Campbell. The problem with which these theologians had to grapple was this: “If the expiatory theory is wrong, if a satisfaction of retributive justice was

not necessary before God could forgive sins, and if on the Cross Christ did not satisfy retributive justice, then what is the meaning of the Cross, and how is it in reality connected with the forgiveness of sins? ”

It cannot be said that any of the answers returned to this question have been satisfactory. In general (putting aside for the moment Dr. McLeod Campbell's treatment of the problem, which is exceptional), the answer has taken this shape: “ God needed nothing whatever, either to dispose or to enable Him to forgive sins, except penitence and faith, on the part of the sinner, and the Cross, by its wonderful manifestation of love and self-sacrifice on the part of God in Christ, broke down the barriers of pride and alienation that prevented sinful men from repenting and believing, and so led them to avail themselves of God's offered mercy.”

As stated thus, the “ moral influence ” theory of the Cross, as it has been called, lies open to two fatal objections.

First, it fails to accord with the numerous passages of Scripture which assert that the submission by Jesus to the death of the Cross was a necessary and essential part of His mission. It therefore involves the twisting and distorting of these numerous Scripture passages from their plain and natural meaning.

Secondly, it fails to supply any good reason for regarding the Cross as a wonderful manifestation of divine love. No moral influence theory, no theory which fails to show that the Cross answers to some demand in the nature of God, as well as to some need in man, can ever meet this criticism :

“Why, if no ulterior end was served by the Cross beyond the manifestation of love to man, should we see in the Cross a manifestation of love to man at all?” A sacrifice that serves no ulterior end is simply an irrationality. In order that it should be regarded as a manifestation of love, there must first be shown that some great good otherwise unobtainable was made attainable through the sacrifice. If, when I have fallen into the water, my friend leaps after me and saves my life at the risk of his own, I am filled with gratitude, and feel assured of his love for me. But if, when I am standing beside him on the beach, and am in no danger, he tells me that to show his love he will cast himself into the sea and suffer himself to be drowned, I can only wonder at his madness. Because of their inability to answer these criticisms, the various moral-influence theories of the Cross, which have been from time to time enunciated, have failed to permanently satisfy, or to make much vigorous headway in the Christian Church. And it may now be very confidently asserted that no theory which does not clearly recognise that the Cross answers to a demand in the nature of God as well as to the needs of sinful man will ever gain general acceptance in the Christian Church.

When the various moral-influence theories thus failed to vindicate themselves as loyal interpreters of Scripture and as capable expositors of the Saviourhood of Jesus, it was only natural that there should be a movement of reaction towards the expiatory theory, and that the endeavour should again be made to set that theory forth in such a way as to free it from the objections to which it had been ex-

posed. Such a movement we find exemplified in the works of Dr. Denney and Mr. Scott Lidgett. Neither of these theologians, however, has succeeded in bringing the much desired light out of the darkness, and their failure only deepens the impression that no possible modification of the expiatory theory will ever explain the problem of the Cross. Indeed, no one who has at all accurately gauged the strength of the spirit of revolt from the expiatory theory, and who does not wish to befog his mind with delusions, can allow himself to be persuaded that that spirit will ever be satisfied with anything short of the complete renunciation of the expiatory theory.

On the other hand, no one who knows the heart of the Christian Church can ever permit himself to believe that the Church will suffer the expiatory theory to be discarded until it is first clearly seen that the great interests which that theory has in the past safeguarded, namely the integrity and authority of the Scriptures, and the unique Saviourhood of Jesus Christ, are effectively preserved and vindicated.

It would appear then that the only way out of the difficulty must lie in finding some necessity in the nature of God other than the necessity of satisfying retributive justice, and in showing that the Cross is the response to this necessity. Is there then any other necessity conceivable? As we shall see, there is—a necessity by no means difficult to conceive, and to which it is by no means difficult to exhibit the Cross as being the divinely appointed response. Before, however, we can reach the stage where that necessity can properly be defined, it is

needful first to indicate wherein that two-fold difficulty lay which prevented Christian men from long ago perceiving it.

On the one hand, the difficulty lay in this, that those who revolted from the expiatory theory of the Cross were under a strong natural temptation to place themselves in an attitude of hostility to it *too soon*—that is before they had sufficiently examined all the reasons that actually justified them in revolting from it, and also before they had sufficiently examined into all the reasons that justified its defenders in maintaining it. The consequence has been that *the full untenableness of the expiatory theory has never been shown even by those who were most violently opposed to it*, and as a consequence of that again their own theories have been based on inadequate and insecure foundations.

Or we may put the matter thus. The assailants of the expiatory theory's account of the Bridge of Salvation have contented themselves with pointing out that it is a bridge without a proper keystone, and then, allowing themselves to be too easily moved by their feeling of natural aversion, they have gone off to build a doctrinal bridge of their own on *some other site*. What they should have done, what they *must* do before their work can stand, is to completely demolish the expiatory theory bridge—keystone, arches, and all—till not one stone is left on another, and build the new bridge *exactly on the old site*, for it is the one merit of the expiatory theory bridge that it stands on the only true or possible site—it stands where due loyalty to the Scriptures and due recognition of the unique Saviourhood of Jesus indicate the existence

of some necessity in the nature of God to which the Cross of Christ is the only possible or adequate response.

On the other hand, the difficulty lay in this, that if one who was dissatisfied with the expiatory theory endeavoured to build a new bridge on the same old site, without first entirely demolishing the old arches and piers, he was under a strong natural temptation to simply build the same kind of bridge over again, just as weak and unsatisfactory as before, though under a somewhat different name. It was into this danger that Dr. McLeod Campbell fell when he sought to substitute for the necessity of an expiatory satisfaction of justice the necessity of an expiatory confession of sin. It is every whit as impossible to express the experience of the Sinless Christ on the Cross as constituting a real confession of sin, as we have seen it to be impossible to express the experience of the sinless Christ on the Cross as constituting a real satisfaction of retributive justice.

We see then that even though it be assumed that the expiatory theory is entirely wrong and the revolt against it thoroughly justifiable, yet premature and violent, and also mild and inadequate attempts at revolt, were equally doomed to failure. And yet, human nature being as it is, such ineffective attempts at revolt were necessary as a preliminary to the revolt which should issue in a successful reformation of the Church's doctrine. It was only by tracing the causes of the ineffectiveness of these unavailing attempts to overthrow the expiatory theory that the real nature of the problem could be discerned and the clue to the solution found.

From what has now been said, certain determining features of the true explanation of the Cross begin to appear. On the one hand, it must do full justice to the spirit of revolt from the expiatory theory. It must exhibit that spirit of revolt as being the work of the Holy Spirit on the consciences of men, leading them out of error into truth. In doing this, it must exhibit clearly what is the real root of all the repugnance that earnest souls have felt towards that theory. It must go to the very bottom of that repugnance. In so doing it must show the expiatory theory as entirely untenable, utterly incredible. It must completely demolish and destroy it.

And yet, on the other hand, in the very act of doing this, it must reveal in clearer, brighter light than ever all of truth for which the expiatory theory has stood in the past—the authority of the Scriptures—the Saviourhood of Jesus—the dread reality of sin, the blessed reality of salvation.

In William Morris's *Earthly Paradise* the story is told of how a certain Greek adventurer, in the fabulous days of old, landed from his ship on an island and pushed his way far inland. Coming alone to an ancient and nearly ruined castle, he found in an underground chamber, and surrounded by treasures of inestimable value, an enchanted maiden of the rarest beauty. From her lips he learned that, having offended the goddess Diana, she was doomed always, except for one day in the year, to appear in the guise of a hideous dragon, but that if one who loved her should be found to have the courage, while she wore her dragon shape, to kiss her on the lips, she would then be freed from

the doom and wear for ever after her own proper and beauteous form. The wanderer undertook the task of rescue, and next day was put to the test. The maiden appeared before him as a revolting dragon fearful to behold, and tearing the body of a newly slain goat in its claws. The wanderer's blood curdled within him at the sight, yet for a while he stood his ground. Then, however, the poet has to tell how, when this shape of terror

creeping on, came close to where he stood
And raised its head to him and wrinkled throat,
Then he cried out and wildly at her smote,
Shutting his eyes, and turned and from the place
Ran swiftly, with a white and ghastly face.

A little more faith and courage and love, and the end of the tale had all been different.

The expiatory theory, let it now be said with perfect plainness, is not the true explanation of the Cross of Christ. It is that repulsive semblance of the truth which has prevented many a sensitive and earnest soul from finding the truth, and to assert with loud protestations or to try to prove with laborious, painstaking zeal that it is the beautiful and worthy setting of the truth, detracts not a jot from its inherent repulsiveness. And yet it is also true that *behind* that repulsive semblance, *and nowhere else*, the real truth has lain concealed, awaiting, not the *blows* of fear and hate, but the *kiss* of courageous faith and love, in order to emerge in all its divine and solemn beauty upon the gaze of believing souls.

CHAPTER V.

THE SCRIPTURE DATA HITHERTO IGNORED.

THE task which now lies before us as the final preliminary stage to the setting forth of the true explanation of the problem of the Cross, is the complete demolition of the expiatory theory. There is no room for false pity in the discharge of the sacred duty we have undertaken. In the mystical poem in which William Morris sets forth the experiences of Psyche, on that perilous pilgrimage to the under world which was by and by to end in her attainment of immortal life, the poet describes her as being tempted, when crossing the dark river which bounded the Kingdom of the dead, to show pity to the spectral semblance of her father, which appeared in the river and piteously begged to be taken aboard the boat.

Now at these words the tears ran down apace
For memory of the once familiar face,
And those old days, wherein, a little child
'Twixt awe and love, beneath those eyes she smiled ;
False pity moved her heart.

But Psyche, forewarned that this was but a snare of her enemy, and that to yield would be fatal to the success of her mission, and knowing that her real father was safe in the abodes of the blessed, was able to resist the crafty appeal and pass safely on to her goal. It is not otherwise with ourselves.

We cannot afford the luxury of false pity; yet doubtless we shall be greatly tempted to indulge ourselves therein. We have to proceed to the complete demolition of the expiatory theory, leaving not one stone of all its structure lying on another, and it may be that some of us shall seem to hear the lamentable cries of those—our honoured spiritual ancestors in the past—who pinned their faith to that theory, and gave their lives to its exposition and defence.

And yet to yield to such sentimentality would be fatal weakness. Why did our spiritual ancestors cling as they did to the expiatory theory of the Cross? Simply because they, not unnaturally, but far too hastily, as we have seen, had come to regard it as the only true and worthy shrine for the Gospel of Christ—the only true and adequate answer to the great problem of the Cross. If it can now be shown that they were mistaken, and that the expiatory theory is a very unworthy, ineffective, unscriptural interpretation of the Cross, then there can be no question that our spiritual ancestors are far more likely to be grieved in spirit by our inexcusable clinging to their excusable errors, than by our using their very errors as a means of reaching the real truth.

But *can* the expiatory theory be demolished? One thing is clear. Only the power and authority of the Scriptures can demolish it. It was through its claim to be Scriptural that it gained the position of power and influence which it has held in the Christian Church. It is only by the demonstration that that claim cannot possibly be supported that it can ever be dethroned from its position of power.

No merely philosophical or rationalistic objections will ever avail to cast the expiatory theory from its seat.

Has it then been demonstrated that the claims of the expiatory theory to be regarded as scriptural are utterly untenable? We can scarcely in honesty answer "Yes." These claims have in recent years been questioned, challenged, denied, and beyond a doubt, greatly shaken, but they have not been completely demolished. Thus, though Dr. Horton, in 1893, declared that the view which maintains "that Christ died in the place of sinners, taking on Himself their punishment so that they can go unpunished, is shattered on all the salient points of the New Testament teaching,"¹ yet Dr. Denney, ten years later, in his *Death of Christ*, is found going over the New Testament teaching and discovering all through it corroboratory evidence of the view, or something very like the view, which Dr. Horton pronounces untenable. When doctors differ thus, what is the plain man to think? The truth is that so long as the controversy remains in that region of debate, amongst solitary texts which have been fought over for centuries, where only trained exegetes can properly discuss the questions at issue, the controversy may last almost interminably. It is only by bringing the conflict down on to ground where Christians of ordinary intelligence and education can pronounce judgment just as surely as the most highly trained scholar, that we can bring the question to a decisive issue. And this we now propose to do by showing that we find in the Scriptures two great, important, perfectly plain, and intelligible truths bearing on the Cross

¹ *Faith and Criticism*, p. 231.

which, for reasons to be explained, have never, by theologians either on one side or the other, been allowed, as they ought to have been allowed, to give their evidence in regard to the true interpretation of the Cross.

These two great Scripture truths bearing on the Cross have already been mentioned and the nature of their testimony indicated in Chapter II. They are the Truth of the Crime of the Crucifixion and the Truth of the Coming Judgment. That they are Scripture truths directly bearing on the Cross is beyond dispute, and yet the remarkable fact is that these most important witnesses to the true interpretation of the Cross have been almost entirely suppressed in the theological discussions that have been carried on in the past.

Thus, for example, Dr. Crawford begins his able work on the Atonement by stating that it is his intention to proceed by the inductive method. "In the first place," he says, "we shall endeavour to analyse and classify those passages of the New Testament which bear upon the subject, and to deduce from them such conclusions as a fair induction and interpretation of them may seem to warrant." Everyone will recognise that this is the only legitimate mode of procedure. But how does Dr. Crawford fulfil his duty? Does he really gather together all the passages of Scripture bearing on the mediatorial work and sufferings of Jesus Christ? He does not. He gives us a long list of passages, all of them perfectly accurate and true, showing how Christ is spoken of as "dying for sinners," "dying for our sins," "bearing our sins," being "made sin," and "made a curse"

for us, and so on, and this list is reprinted by Dr. Dale as an appendix to his own book on the same subject, and yet, in all this list, there is to be found not one of the many passages in Scripture which tell us that Christ was crucified "by sinners," and that the crucifixion was a terrible crime. Nor is there to be found one of the many passages which indicate that it is on the ground of the revelation of the sinfulness of sin furnished by this terrible crime of the sinful crucifixion of the Son of God that men are warned to expect a great and terrible Day of Judgment, or satisfaction to retributive justice, in the future.

It is, therefore, manifest that Dr. Crawford's induction from the teaching of the Scriptures concerning the meaning of the Cross is vitiated all through by these fatal omissions. What he gives us is an interpretation, not of the Death of Christ as, according to the Scriptures, it actually occurred, by divine appointment, at the hands of sinful men, but an interpretation of the Death of Christ, as it might have occurred anyhow, so long as it was a divinely appointed death. His theory owes nothing to the Scripture teaching of the Crime of the Crucifixion. It takes no account whatever of that teaching. On the contrary, it ignores and suppresses it, and the consequence is that the moment that teaching of the Scriptures is brought fairly forward into the prominence which the Scriptures assign to it, his theory vanishes into thin air. Let us now, before we inquire into the reasons for the suppression of this Scripture teaching, assure ourselves that it really is Scripture teaching. Is it really the case that the Scriptures describe that death which Jesus

was appointed by His Father to die, as death at the hands of wicked men—as a death which it was a crime to inflict—a death the infliction of which God, the righteous Judge of all, must inevitably regard as a terrible sin which He must judge and avenge? There can be really no question as to the answer. It is not too strong a statement to say that the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles are saturated with this teaching. We must content ourselves with pointing out one or two of the more striking passages.

In the twenty-first chapter of Matthew we find Jesus, immediately before the crucifixion, uttering the parable of the vineyard owner. He speaks this parable in the temple. He has for audience not merely the multitude, but also a deputation of the chief priests and rulers, who have come for the express purpose of questioning Him, and to whom He directly addresses Himself. This vineyard owner, Jesus says, let out his vineyard to husbandmen. When he sent his servants to receive his fruit, these husbandmen beat or stoned or killed them. At last he sent his son, saying, "Surely they will reverence my son." But the husbandmen said, "This is the heir. Let us kill him and take his inheritance." And they took him and cast him forth out of the vineyard and killed him.

Now here we have, in parabolic form, an account of the crucifixion given by our Lord Himself. For what special purpose did Jesus speak this parable? What follows shows that it was to drive home to the consciences of the men who rejected Him their moral responsibility for the crime of which they were about to be guilty. For Jesus asks next,

“When, therefore, the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do unto those husbandmen?” And out of their own mouths these sin-blinded sinners condemn themselves. They reply, “He will miserably destroy those miserable men and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.” And Jesus accepts their answer as true, for He replies, “I say unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and shall be given unto a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And he that falleth on this stone (Himself) shall be broken in pieces, but on whomsoever it shall fall it shall scatter him as dust.” In other words, “He who, in his blindness, *rejects Me*, shall suffer grievously for his rejection, but he whom *I reject* as one who, seeing the light, has sinned against the light, shall perish utterly.” In this passage it seems beyond all question that our Lord Himself represents His crucifixion as a terrible crime rendering its perpetrators liable to a terrible judgment in the future.

Again, in the next chapter but one, we find Jesus saying, “Ye are the sons of them that slew the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?” What is the ground of this terrible indictment? It is, and it can be nothing else than this, that the men against whom it is levelled were about to commit a fearful crime in crucifying the Christ of God.

Later on, on the day of the crucifixion, Matthew tells us that the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus, *feared* exceedingly, saying, “Truly this was a Son of God.” And Luke adds

the further statement that "the multitudes that came together to this sight, when they beheld the things that were done, returned smiting their breasts."¹ Why, we must ask, this all-prevailing horror and fear unless the consciousness were already beginning to dawn that a transcendently great crime had been committed, which God would surely judge and avenge?

Again, on the day of Pentecost, when Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, stands up to utter the first Christian sermon ever preached, how does he bring his argument to a point? He does it in these words: "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified."² And what is the effect of that utterance on his audience? They are "pricked in their hearts."³ They are filled with horror and fear because of the great crime in which they are implicated, and with which in these words they are directly charged.

Again, when Stephen, the first Christian martyr, stands before the Sanhedrin, what is his defence? It is, in effect, a sermon on the text, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto Moses." "Jesus," says Stephen, "is that prophet like unto Moses." "How can that be," he assumes the Jews to ask, "for Moses was the accepted leader of the Jews, while this Jesus of Nazareth has been rejected of the Jews?" "You are wrong," replies Stephen, "your idea that Moses was an accepted leader of the Jews of his own time is merely a pious delusion. Moses was nothing of the kind. Moses was at first rejected by his own people, and compelled to flee

¹ Luke xxiii. 48.

² Acts ii. 36.

³ Acts ii. 37.

into the wilderness for many years. When, later on, he did attempt to lead them out of Egypt, instead of obeying him, they rebelled against him in the desert, and worshipped the golden calf instead of the God of Moses." "In the same spirit," says Stephen, "only in a worse degree, have ye rulers of Jerusalem dealt with the Christ of God." "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do *always* resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute, and they killed them which showed before the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye have now become *betrayers* and *murderers*—ye who received the law as it was ordained by angels and kept it not."¹ And when the rulers of Jerusalem heard these things they were cut to the heart, and gnashed upon Stephen with their teeth, and forthwith in a frenzy of rage stoned him to death. Yet Stephen had spoken nothing but the truth.

Now from the few portions of Scripture here selected, which are but specimens of a whole stratum of Scripture teaching clearly visible in the New Testament, we find that the Son of God who suffered on the Cross, the multitude who witnessed His sufferings, the first Christian apostle who stood out before the world at Pentecost to proclaim the meaning of the Cross, and the first Christian martyr who died for the truth of the Cross, all agree in testifying that the crucifixion was an appalling crime which God as righteous ruler may be expected by men to regard with abhorrence and to judge and avenge. It is no doubt also true that the Scriptures declare that

¹ Acts vii. 51-53.

the death of Christ was divinely appointed, and foretold, that Jesus endured it of His own free will, and that it was a death for sin, by which the salvation of believing sinners was secured; and any true explanation of the Cross must take full account of all these aspects of the Scripture teaching. But these aspects of the Scripture teaching must not be allowed to blind our eyes to the fact that the *very first thing* that the Scriptures insist we shall recognise regarding the Cross is that the crucifixion was brought about *by the hands of wicked men*—that it was a *terrible crime*, which the God of holiness could not possibly regard as other than a crime.

Now it would appear that any adequate recognition of this scriptural truth must be instantaneously fatal to the expiatory theory. The moment this witness is allowed to speak with full weight and authority the expiatory theory disappears into thin air, for it is simply inconceivable that the crucifixion of Christ can be, at one and the same moment, a terrible crime which God is bound to regard as a crime, and also a means of satisfying God's retributive justice. The only question that can properly be raised is whether this witness from the Scriptures has any right to be heard in regard to the interpretation of the Cross, and if so, why has that right been so persistently suppressed in the discussions of the past.

But before we can deal with these latter points there is more to be said. We have still to hear the evidence of the Truth of the Coming Judgment. Not only is the Crucifixion of Jesus unflinchingly described in the Scriptures as a crime—as a crime

which men might expect God as righteous ruler to avenge—but it is also described as a transcendently great and unique crime, the occurrence of which is most intimately and vitally connected with a transcendently great and unique manifestation of God's retributive justice in the future. According to the expiatory theory, God's retributive justice was satisfied *on the Cross*. According to the Scriptures, it would appear that God's retributive justice *has never, as yet, been satisfied in human history at all*. The satisfaction of divine retributive justice is something which is yet to come, and the Cross, and the preaching of the Cross, are set forth in the Scriptures as constituting the necessary preliminaries to its coming. The Scripture view of God is not that He cannot extend mercy till He has first satisfied His retributive justice, but rather that He cannot come forth in all the dreadful terrors of His retributive justice till He has first manifested mercy to the very uttermost. But the expiatory theory of the Cross, by its insistence on a complete satisfaction of retributive justice in the past, has largely robbed, in the minds of many Christians, the Truth of the Coming Judgment of all reality and spiritual force. It could not well be otherwise. What need can there be for a great satisfaction to God's retributive justice *in the future*, if God's retributive justice has *already* been satisfied to the full upon the Cross?

That the Scriptures do establish a close and vital relation between the Crime of the Crucifixion and the Coming Judgment is shown conclusively by the following passages: "But Jesus, turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for

Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts that never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"¹ It would be possible to hold, though impossible to prove, that this prophecy of doom was fulfilled and exhausted in the destruction of Jerusalem. It is not possible to deny that here a vital relation is established between the Crime of the Cross and some form of doom and judgment in the future that lay beyond the Cross. There is certainly not the slightest sign here that God's retributive justice was *satisfied* on the Cross.

Again, in Matthew xxvi. 64, Jesus, before the Sanhedrin, proclaims, "Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Here the connection between the Crime of the Cross and the Coming Judgment is found rather in the circumstances than in the actual words uttered. When the prisoner at the bar tells His judges that the time is coming when they shall stand at His judgment seat, the inevitable inference is that there they shall answer for the unjust manner in which they have dealt with Him.

Again, when Jesus on the Cross itself, prays, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," the inevitable inferences are, first, that here is a terrible crime which deserves the utmost severity of divine punishment, and second, that, if men do *not* repent and seek forgiveness, but, after

¹ Luke xxiii 28-31

being enabled to know what it is that they do, go on to commit the same sin over again, then even Christ Himself could no longer pray the Father to forgive them, but must expect the Father to pour forth upon them the vials of His holy wrath. There is no sign here that on the Cross that holy wrath is being quenched or satisfied.

Again when, after the crucifixion, the apostles take up the tale, we find the same ideas clearly brought out. "Save yourselves from this crooked generation," they cry at Pentecost. How did they know it was "a crooked generation"? Through the Crime of the Cross. How did they know the "crooked generation" was in danger? Because they knew that God must avenge the Crime of the Cross. How did the "crooked generation" come to respond so readily and so deeply to the apostles' appeal? Because the preaching was so simple and yet so powerful; because every Jew who really believed that God had raised the crucified Jesus from the dead could not but immediately feel the horror of the Crime of the Crucifixion, and turn from all sin as from something infinitely horrible—something that he had never known it to be before—something that was sure to bring down upon him, if he persisted in it, the terrible judgments of God's avenging wrath.

It is true that the apostles freely admit that the people and even the rulers had committed their great crime in a measure of ignorance—it is true that they even urge that, in the death of Jesus, the Scriptures were fulfilled and the purposes of God carried out, yet none the less they hold the men who had committed the great crime responsible, and

solemnly warn those who, beholding the awful sinfulness of sin in the light of that great crime, yet refuse to seek forgiveness, of the certainty and terribleness of the impending judgment. Thus Peter, speaking in Solomon's porch to the people who had gathered in amazement after the curing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate, tells them that they had "denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer" in his stead—that they had "killed the Prince of Life"—that though they had done it in ignorance, and though the Scriptures had been fulfilled, yet they could not be excused. They must repent. He whom they had crucified was the prophet spoken of by Moses. Of that prophet it was written "that every soul which shall not hearken to that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people."¹ Here is again the note of Coming Judgment, following hard upon a declaration of the Crime of the Cross.

By a natural transition, which in no way breaks the connection, the idea of the judgment comes to be linked with the crucifixion through the resurrection, rather than with the crucifixion directly. The people had expressed their verdict on Jesus by crucifying Him. God had expressed His verdict on Jesus by raising Him from the dead. It was only natural, therefore, that the apostles should accompany the announcement of the resurrection with the announcement that the Risen One was also to be the Judge of those who had so misjudged Him. And this is what we find them doing. Thus Peter proclaims in the presence of Cornelius and his friends, "Him God raised up the third day. And he charged us to preach unto the people that

¹ Acts iii. 23.

this is He which is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.”¹

And Paul announces to the Athenians on Mars Hill, “The times of ignorance, therefore, God overlooked; but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent, inasmuch as He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.”² Here is practically the same message which was delivered by Peter to the guilty Jews, proclaimed by Paul to Gentiles who had had no direct connection with the Crime of the Crucifixion. Yet it would seem that the Gentiles had every whit as much reason to repent and to fear the Coming Judgment as the Jews. Why? There is no possible answer to this question, unless we recognise that the Crime of the Cross was a unique and transcendent crime—that it exhibited the end towards which all sin would lead if God did not continually check and restrain it—that, therefore, it was fitted to open the eyes of all sin-blinded sinners to the exceeding sinfulness of their sin, and pointed to a coming day when all who continued to sin in spite of this opening of their eyes might expect to meet the unrestrained holy wrath of God. On this supposition the apostolic teaching is perfectly clear and intelligible. On the supposition of the expiatory theory that there was practically no crime in the Cross at all, and that God’s justice was satisfied thereby, all this clear, powerful, heart-searching teaching becomes shrouded in impenetrable mystery, and robbed of all its spiritual force.

¹ Acts x, 42. . .

² Acts xvii, 31.

It is in the epistles of the New Testament that most of those passages are found which, being interpreted with prosaic literalness, have given to the expiatory theory what little show of scriptural support it possesses, and yet these very epistles abound with other passages which ought to have been sufficient to indicate that those who adopted the expiatory hypothesis were following a false clue. Thus, in 1 Thess. ii. 15, Paul describes the Jews as those “who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and drove out us and please not God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, to fill up their sins alway!”

Again, in 2 Thess. i. 7, Paul speaks of “the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints.” There is no indication here that God’s holy anger against sin has already been satisfied on the Cross.

So also in Rom. i. 18, Paul declares that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven,” not as being quenched or satisfied on the Cross, but as burning in holy fire “against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.”

Finally, in the Apocalypse, one of the latest of the New Testament writings, we find exactly the same idea presented to us—the Coming Judgment which is to be carried out by Him who suffered by

and for the sins of men. Rev. i. 7, "Behold He cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they which pierced Him, and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn because of Him." There is no sign here that they who pierced the Christ had enabled Him to do or suffer anything by which the justice of God was satisfied. The Christ of the Book of Revelation appears indeed as the Saviour of the penitent and believing, but He appears also as "with eyes of fire," and with "a sharp two-edged sword proceeding out of His mouth." He threatens to kill the children of Jezebel with death that all the churches may know that He "searcheth the reins and hearts." He speaks of "coming as a thief," so that the sinfully careless will not know the hour of His visitation. No one in heaven or earth or under the earth is found worthy to open the Book of Doom, save only He. And He is said to be worthy. Why? Because He has been slain, because He gave His infinitely precious life in order that there might be no need for any to perish under the doom, but that through His blood there might be purchased unto God men of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. It is He and He alone who died sinlessly under sin, by the hand of sinful men, for the sake of the souls of sinful men, who is worthy to execute the judgment of the holy wrath of God against the souls who, with their eyes now opened to the enormity of their guilt, have yet continued in sin and rejected so costly a salvation. And He who is alone worthy to execute the holy retribution of God does not shrink from His task any more than He shrank from the Cross. He opens the seals, and as

a result, we read: "And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come, and who is able to stand?" Here is a veritable picture of a satisfaction to divine retributive justice, but it is a picture not of what has already happened, but of what is yet to happen. Jesus Himself has told us that "the good tidings of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations, and then shall the end come."¹

We have seen then that here are two great and important truths of the Scripture—the Truth of the Crime of the Crucifixion and the Truth of the Coming Judgment—truths that are plainly set forth all through the New Testament—which yet stand in utter hostility to the expiatory theory of the Cross. The former truth leads us to reject that theory because it is *impossible*—for how can God's most holy justice be satisfied through the commission of a crime on the person of His Son, or through the Son's submitting to have a crime committed upon His person? The latter truth calls upon us to reject the expiatory theory, because it is *unnecessary*, for how can it have been necessary that God's retributive justice, which is, in the future, to be satisfied to the full in the final Judgment, should already have been satisfied to the full upon the Cross?

¹ Matt. xxiv. 14.

Yet these two truths are so plainly set forth in the Scriptures that if the legitimate effect of their recognition is to completely demolish the expiatory theory, then it seems somewhat of a mystery that they did not produce that effect long ago. "How comes it about," we must ask, "that the testimony of these two witnesses has been so largely suppressed—that their utter contrariety to the expiatory theory was not sooner perceived?" To this question we shall endeavour to supply the answer in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TWO-FOLD FORM OF DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.

IF it be true, as was maintained in the last chapter, that a due recognition of the Scripture truths of the Crime of the Crucifixion and of the Coming Judgment involves a complete renunciation of the expiatory theory of the Cross, why was it, since these truths are so plainly set forth in the Scriptures, that this result of their recognition was not clearly seen long ago? As a matter of fact, the contradiction between these portions of Scripture and the expiatory theory has been visible for long to earnest and thoughtful men outside the Christian Church, and has formed one of the great stumbling-blocks to their acceptance of the gospel, and to their acknowledgment of the authority of the Scriptures. Thus Winwood Reade, in his *Martyrdom of Man*, expresses his repugnance to the expiatory theory in the following ironical description of the gospel of the Christians: "He (God) sent His only-begotten Son into a corner of Syria; and because His Son had been murdered His wrath had been partly appeased."¹ It is but natural that earnest men who find in this statement a truthful account of the Christian gospel should turn their backs upon the Christian gospel.

But those whose spiritual experience has assured

¹ p. 236.

them of the Saviourhood of Christ and the authority of the Scriptures cannot turn their backs upon the Christian gospel. They know, with a knowledge which neither intellectual nor even moral perplexities can overthrow, that in some way they owe the forgiveness of their sins to the death of Christ. And because of this knowledge they naturally come under the influence of those potent forces which in religion tend to the conservation of all that has been held for long centuries in the Church and defended by good and pious men.

And further, in connection with the doctrine of the Cross, they have had their eyes largely closed to the objections to which the expiatory theory is liable, by a difficulty which may be briefly stated as follows: The understanding of the problem of the Cross involves an understanding of the manner in which divine sovereignty stands related to human freedom, and it is only within comparatively recent years that the Christian Church has been enabled to leave as much room for human freedom and responsibility as the Scriptures do. In the crucifixion of Jesus Christ there are at least three free moral personalities to be taken account of—the great unseen Agent, God the Father; His visible representative, the God-man; and sinful man. Unless there is some true understanding of the conditions under which these three personalities act, and of the relations which they bear to each other, there manifestly cannot be a true understanding of the meaning of the event which results from their action.

Now, when the Christian idea of God was in the first century of the Church's history suddenly pro-

jected into the current of human thought, it proved to be an idea so immeasurably vaster and grander than the human mind had ever before been called upon to grapple with, that it produced not only overwhelming impressions of its truth, but also, almost inevitably, great and long-lasting distortions of the truth. This great God, so infinitely powerful that He could make all things, even the wrath of wicked men, to praise Him and serve His holy purposes, so infinitely wise that no cunning of man or wiles of Satan could prevent Him from realising His ends, this great, Almighty, Eternal God, ruling from heaven over all the confused turmoil of this puny, transitory human race, seemed of Himself so completely to fill all things that no room appeared to be left for man to exist as a free and morally responsible being at all. Gradually, however, as the centuries rolled on and the Holy Spirit continued His gracious work upon the minds and consciences of believers, these distortions of the truth have been vanishing and the mists of earth and sin have been clearing away. Yet they had by no means entirely cleared away at the time of the Reformation.

The theology of the Reformation was still very largely a fatalistic theology, insisting so overbearingly on the sovereignty of the mere arbitrary will of God, that when the Gospel of Christ was preached under that theology men were continually afflicted with the torturing doubt whether the gospel offer of salvation was a genuine offer or not; whether they might not be the victims of a divine predestination to eternal doom against which it was utterly useless and hopeless to strive; whether they really had any

free choice at all in accepting or rejecting the salvation offered to men in Christ.

These doubts have now very largely disappeared. They do not afflict this generation of ours in the way in which they afflicted the generations preceding us. Why is it so? Because the Christian Church, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, has been attaining to a higher and truer conception of God; because now it is coming to be seen that the idea of Fatherhood takes us nearer to the real truth about God than the idea of Kingship does. God is King no doubt, but still more He is Father, and His Fatherhood imposes conditions upon the exercise of His Kingly power, of which the old theology failed to take account. If God were King of this world unreservedly and without conditions, then all things that happen in the world would express His ideal will and be wholly satisfactory to His nature. But in that case, God's will would already be done on earth as it is in heaven, and there would be no sin and no need of a Saviour from sin, or else the existence of sin would be pleasing to God and in accordance with His ideal will. Neither of these alternatives can by any possibility be accepted; therefore it is necessary to recognise that there are two forms of divine sovereignty, one of which God already possesses in this world, but with which He is not satisfied, and one which He does not yet possess, which He is seeking to attain, and with which alone He can be satisfied. The one form of sovereignty—that which God already possesses but with which He is not satisfied—is what we may call that sovereignty of Kingship or of practical Will, in virtue of which God exercises

a measure of control over even the most sinful and rebellious of men, and causes their actions, quite independently of any will or intention of theirs, to serve His wise and holy purposes. The other and higher form of sovereignty—that which God does not yet possess, or possesses only imperfectly in this world—and with which alone He can be satisfied, is what we may call that sovereignty of Fatherhood or of Ideal Will, in virtue of which God reigns over such free moral beings as willingly receive Him in faith and love and holy obedience.

God's sovereignty of Kingship is illustrated for us in the use made by Him of such instruments as Sargon of Assyria, and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and Cyrus of Persia, in furthering His purposes with reference to the Jews. He used Sargon and Nebuchadnezzar as rods of judgment wherewith to chastise Israel for her sins. On the other hand, he used Cyrus as an instrument of mercy wherewith to effect Israel's deliverance from captivity. Yet neither Sargon nor Nebuchadnezzar nor Cyrus had themselves any idea that they were being used by God in this way. It was not from a motive of desire to obey the God of Israel that they thus acted. They had no sense of a divine commission from Jehovah. It would perhaps be going further than we are entitled to penetrate into the divine counsels to say that God had absolutely no regard for the character of these men in choosing them as His servants, but it is clearly stated in the Scriptures that they themselves had no true knowledge of their calling by God. There is, therefore, a sense in which it is absolutely true that man is simply clay in the hands of the potter. No matter

what we seek to do with our lives, God will use them for His own purposes. No matter what our character is, or our knowledge of God, or our faith in God, or our desire or lack of desire to obey God, no matter though we have no other idea in our minds than simply to please ourselves and do our own will, yet God, in spite of us, will make our lives serve His wise and holy purposes.

But is this sovereignty sufficient for God? Is He *satisfied* with it? Most assuredly He is not. He is not merely the All-mighty and the All-wise, but He is the All-holy and the All-loving also, and He never can be satisfied except with that sovereignty of holy love which is gained and can only be gained by winning the voluntary obedience, the free, glad, spontaneous devotion of the person who is loved. God will not and cannot be satisfied so long as men merely serve Him blindly, with their hearts all the while full of wrong and bad and selfish ambitions. He must have His *servants* become His *children*, and learn to bring into His service the purest of motives. He must have them perform their service exactly, doing neither more nor less than He wills. He must have them understand to the utmost of their power what they are doing. He must have them to possess a solemn and serious sense of their divine commission. He must have them carry out His commands in the very same spirit of holy love in which the commands are given by Himself. This is that sovereignty of Fatherhood which God is seeking to obtain over the human race, but which He has as yet obtained only very imperfectly.

The question then arises, "How far can God use

that sovereignty of Kingship which He already possesses in virtue of His Omnipotence and Omniscience, but with which He is not satisfied, to aid Him in securing that sovereignty of Fatherhood which He seeks to obtain, and with which alone He can be satisfied? ” He does use it, as we have seen in the case of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus. Yet it is manifest that by the exercise of that sovereignty alone, God could never attain to the sovereignty which He desires. God can only win the sovereignty of love and holiness by showing Himself before the eyes of men as *sovereign in love and holiness*. And that He could never do so long as He had such utterly inadequate mediums for manifesting His love and holiness as Cyrus or Nebuchadnezzar. How much, for example, of God’s pure and holy hatred of sin was outwardly revealed in Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of Jerusalem? Only a very, very little. God’s meaning, God’s feeling, was largely hidden by the human instrumentality through which it was conveyed. It was hidden by the sinful human passions of the Babylonians—by their lust of power—by their thirst for blood—their greed of plunder—their arrogant pride. Not thus could the austere purity of God’s holy hatred of sin be adequately or truly manifested to the world. And so we soon find Hebrew prophecy recognising the inadequacy of God’s human judgment rods to express truly the will of God, as when Zechariah proclaims to the Jews rebuilding the temple, “ Thus saith the Lord, I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. But with great wrath am I wroth against the arrogant Gentiles, for I was but a little angry

with Israel, and they aggravated the evil.”¹ Most instructive of all, God acknowledged no obligation to Babylon for carrying out His will in regard to Israel. Very soon, the rod which had been used to smite Israel was itself broken and cast aside. Babylon went down into ruin none the less completely because she had been used by God to accomplish His purposes. Again, how much of God’s infinite mercy and loving kindness was outwardly revealed in Cyrus’s deliverance of the Jews from their captivity? Only a very, very little. Cyrus, in setting free the Jews, was merely pursuing the same line of policy which he followed with regard to other peoples whom, previous to his reign, the Babylonians had conquered. He simply signed a document, gave a few instructions, appointed a few officials to see that the matter was properly attended to, and thought no more about the affair. It was a very small thing to Cyrus, this deliverance of the Jews—a mere incident in his career—a matter of comparative indifference. It was not possible in the nature of things that, through such a medium, there could be conveyed to Israel any adequate sense of the infinitely tender, yearning, solicitous love which was in God’s heart towards her.

In truth, if it had not been for the great and invaluable work of interpretation done by the Hebrew prophets, it is impossible to believe that the Jews would have been able, save in the slightest degree, to understand the feeling of God towards them, as it was manifested through the deeds of Nebuchadnezzar and of Cyrus.

The Hebrew prophets were therefore servants of

¹ Zech. i. 14, 15.

God in a far deeper and truer sense than were these Gentile potentates. They were important and, in a sense, indispensable instruments in helping God to use the sovereignty of Kingship which He already possesses in acquiring the sovereignty of Fatherhood which He seeks to gain.

But here we must observe that the Hebrew prophets could never have accomplished their great work of interpreting God to Israel if they had not themselves known God, understood His character, and lived in communion and fellowship with Him, striving to express Him truly through their own consecrated words and deeds. In God's use of the Gentile Kings, character, motive, intention, knowledge of God's will, counted for nothing. In God's use of the Hebrew prophets, these spiritual possessions were indispensable requisites.

Now, bringing the results of this investigation together, we find that there is a sense in which we may speak of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus and Isaiah and Jeremiah as all being servants of God. There is a sense in which they *all* did the will of God, and therefore there is a sense in which God can be spoken of as doing that which was done through them. It was God who destroyed Jerusalem (through Nebuchadnezzar). It was God who delivered the Jews from captivity (through Cyrus). And yet, because these agents of His were mere blind tools who knew Him not, nor acted in true harmony with His spirit, two results must be recognised as following.

First, God was not, in any valid sense of the word, responsible for the cruelty and bloodthirstiness with which Nebuchadnezzar trampled down

Jerusalem, nor yet for the careless indifference with which Cyrus let the captives go. Second, if God is thus freed from responsibility for the evil done by these "tool" servants of His because of His not possessing complete spiritual control over them, it must also be acknowledged that, owing to that very lack of complete spiritual control, God could never, through such agents, win the sovereignty of love and holiness that He seeks. On the other hand, since Isaiah and Jeremiah were agents of His, who did know Him, who recognised themselves as commissioned by Him and faithfully and humbly discharged their commission in a spirit harmonious with and truly expressive of His Spirit, God held Himself responsible for making good the words they uttered; He acknowledged and used them as His servants in a way in which He could never acknowledge or use such blind "tool-service" as He Himself extracted from the self-willed doings of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus. Isaiah and Jeremiah were partners with God in His great design of acquiring the sovereignty of love and holiness which He seeks, in a way that Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar could never be.

We see then that while God may use and does use any kind of man, good or bad, believing or unbelieving, in ways that *indirectly* further the attainment of His ultimate ends, yet the only kind of man whom God can use to help Him *directly* in gaining that sovereignty of love and holiness which He desires to gain, is the man who knows God, and willingly, consciously trusts and loves and obeys Him. We may defy God to the uttermost of our power, and yet we may be perfectly sure

that God will cause our defiant and rebellious lives to serve the accomplishment of His wise and holy ends. It is entirely true that He makes "the wrath of man to praise Him."¹ It is entirely true that there is a sense in which we may be disobeying God to the uttermost and yet be accomplishing His will all the while. But if that is the kind of doing God's will that our lives result in, then we can expect no reward from God, no acknowledgment of service rendered. It is not *we* who perform the service. It is *God* who extracts it from our lives in spite of us. His holy anger burns against us all the while, and the just punishment of our rebellion we shall, unless we repent and seek forgiveness, assuredly suffer. For it is also written, "The wrath of man worketh *not* the righteousness of God."² There is a will of God with which the wrath of man cannot by any possibility directly co-operate—and to which the wrath of man is for ever and eternally opposed. God has no need of and no desire for the wrath of man to carry out His great designs. He never acknowledges Himself beholden to the wrath of man. It is impossible, now that sin has entered into the world, but that offences shall come, but woe unto the man through whom they come. God can make even these offences serve His ends, but in so doing He always must and always does *treat them as offences*. He never forgets that *sins are sins*, and He never avails Himself of the results of sins in an unholy or ungodlike fashion, as though they had been good deeds done by God-consecrated men. The service which He at all times desires to receive from men is not that service which He has Himself to extract from unwilling and disobedient

¹ Ps. lxxvi. 10.

² James i. 20.

“tools,” but the service which is rendered by those who know and trust and love Him, and therefore willingly and faithfully obey.

And now the point for us to observe is that, until the eyes of the Christian Church were fully opened to these truths regarding divine sovereignty and human freedom and responsibility, they could not well be opened to the full untenableness of the expiatory theory of the Cross. Until the Church had reached this stage in her development, the testimony borne against that theory by the Truth of the Crime of the Crucifixion and the Truth of the Coming Judgment could carry but little weight. So long as no distinction was recognised between a sovereignty which God *has*, and a sovereignty which *as yet He has not*—between a sovereignty with which He is *satisfied* and a sovereignty with which He is *not satisfied*—so long it could be assumed that God, in the exercise of His sovereignty, could make equal use of “tool” service and “consecrated” service, and be equally well satisfied with and equally well glorified in either. The fact that the crucifixion was a crime calling for the vengeance of a righteous God seemed to interpose no obstacle whatever to the belief that it was also in itself a satisfaction of divine justice. All the stress could be laid on the truth that God can make the wrath of man to praise Him. The other truth, equally valid and important, that the wrath of man worketh *not* the righteousness of God, could be quietly and completely ignored. It could be assumed that God’s character for perfect holiness was not in the slightest degree endangered, even though He were represented as *directly* using the most

wicked of men for the holiest of purposes. All was supposed to be covered by the doctrine of divine sovereignty, and any attempt to deny that through the Cross a satisfaction of divine justice was obtained, on the ground that the men who crucified Christ were wicked men, was supposed to mean an entire denial of God's sovereignty over wicked men.

But now that the Church, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, has slowly and painfully been led up to the higher conception of God as Father, and taught to interpret sovereignty in the terms of Fatherhood, as well as of Kingship, the Church has been placed in a position to discern that none of these assumptions are correct.

She can now perceive that it is not the case that God can use or be glorified in the "*tool*" service of *evil* men, in the same way that He can use or be glorified in the "*consecrated*" service of *good* men. She can now perceive that God's character for holiness is endangered, in so far as the representations of men can endanger it, if God is set forth as being willing to avail Himself of the evil deeds of evil men in the same way as He may rightfully avail Himself of the good deeds of good men. She can now perceive that if God is to be represented, as He must be, as securing that, through the Crucifixion of Christ by wicked men, the wrath of man should praise Him, yet He cannot at the same time be represented as securing through the crucifixion a satisfaction of His justice, because so to represent God would mean that He treated a *crime* as though it were *not a crime*, that he regarded "*tool-servants*" as though they were "*consecrated servants*"—that He made *direct*

partners with Himself in his design of securing His sovereignty of love and holiness, *evil and sin-blinded men* who had first to defy and quench all that was God-like within them before they could act as they did.

Christian people can now perceive that if, nineteen hundred years ago, God had really required that His retributive justice should be satisfied through an historical event in which His only-begotten Son was to stand as the representative of the sinner, and men were to be the agents employed in giving effect to the divine condemnation of sin, then not the *worst* but the *best* men in the land—the men most completely under the spiritual control of God—must have been chosen by God for the office, and Jesus Christ must have been crucified not by a Herod, a Pilate, and a Caiaphas, but by a Peter, a James, and a John.

In the moment that the eyes of Christian people are opened to these truths, in that moment the expiatory theory vanishes, and men are left wondering, not whether the theory can be *true*, but *how it could ever have held its place so long in the Church?* The explanation lies in the long persistence of the mist of fatalism. We may roughly describe what has occurred by means of a simile. We may think of the men of the apostolic age as standing on the heights on one side of a great valley, and of ourselves as climbing the heights on the other. And between us and them is the great space across which the Church has been moving during the last nineteen hundred years—which, after all, is a very little space in the sight of Him with whom a thousand years are but as one day.

And we, looking back from the height we have reached, across the lower levels of that great space, are now able to discern that all along the bottom of this valley, right from the opposite side to our own, lie the folds of a dense white mist. The name of that mist is fatalism—an earth-born mist, originating in the error-breeding human mind. It is through that mist, denser at the far side, thinner at the near, that all who have gone before us have looked back upon the apostolic age, and because of the blinding nature of the mist, they have understood its great and unique events with only a partial measure of accuracy. They have in some degree seen the men of the New Testament as trees walking—as visionary men—as more or less unreal men—puppets of God or puppets of Satan—not true human beings left by both God and Satan in the full possession of their moral freedom. But to us it is given, in the Providence of God, through the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, to rise, in a measure at least, above this clinging mist of fatalistic error. To us it is given to look right back across the upper surface of the mist-cloud and see the apostolic age with a clearness and sense of reality never before possible in the history of the Church. Therefore to us also it is given, if we have but the faith and courage to use our great privileges aright, to interpret the Scriptures which were written in that age with a clearness, a certainty, and a sympathetic comprehension that were previously unattainable.

And now that we have seen the reason why the objections to which the expiatory theory is liable could not well be felt in their full force until our

own day, let us now, in bringing to a close the destructive part of our investigation, endeavour to give in a brief summary the full force of these objections. To this end, let us set before our minds the conditions with which any satisfying explanation of the Cross must needs comply. These conditions may be stated as follows: 1. The explanation must so describe the situation caused in the world by the entrance of sin as to show that a work of redemption on the part of God—a work carried out by the Incarnate Son of God and involving His death, was both necessary and possible. 2. The explanation must describe accurately what God really did in view of this situation. 3. The explanation must be able to show how it was that what God did effected the end in view and successfully overcame the evils caused by the entrance of sin.

Now from what has been said in the foregoing pages it can be seen that the fundamental error of the expiatory theory occurred in connection with the first requirement. It so described the situation caused in the world by sin as to show that a work of redemption on the part of God was necessary—but *impossible*. That theory originated in an age when Christian ideas held unchallenged supremacy in the civilised world. Such a thing as intelligent and earnest unbelief did not exist. There was no fear before the eyes of Christian theologians of representing the work of Christ as the achievement of impossibilities. The more they represented Christ as achieving impossibilities, the more they seemed to themselves to be magnifying His work of redemption. And so the theologians who origi-

nated the expiatory theory, in guarding against light and trivial views of the situation caused by sin, in describing that situation as so serious and dangerous that it manifestly called for a work of redemption by God in Christ, utterly failed to perceive the other equally great danger of describing the situation as *hopeless*, as being so utterly dark and gloomy that no possible dealing with it, even by God in Christ, could be effective for human salvation.

Here then is the sunken rock on which the expiatory theory is shattered to pieces. It describes the situation caused by sin in such terms that, if these terms had been really true, then man's redemption would have been for ever impossible. If a real satisfaction to God's retributive justice had been necessary as a preliminary to God's forgiveness, then there could have been no one left to forgive after the satisfaction to justice had been obtained, for the only real satisfaction to divine retributive justice which is also possible, is that which consists in bringing the wages of sin—death—home to the sinner himself. A real satisfaction to God's retributive justice represents God's *final* dealing with sin, and to represent God as dealing *finally* with sin as a *preliminary* to further merciful dealings with sin, is an impossibility and an absurdity. If the fundamental assumption of the expiatory theory had been true, if satisfaction to retributive justice must precede forgiveness, then there could have been no history for the human race, for in the moment that sin entered into the world, in that moment death, eternal death—the wages of sin—must have instantaneously fallen upon sinful man.

Starting with this initial impossibility, the expiatory theory, when it comes to deal with the second requirement, and to describe accurately what God did through Christ in view of the situation caused by sin, finds itself confronted with two additional impossibilities. It has to represent God the Father, in securing the satisfaction to justice supposed to be required, as treating His Son as a sinner. And it has to represent the sinful men who crucified Christ as being in some sense the executors of the divine justice. Such tasks are sheer and utter impossibilities, and the only possible result of endeavouring to achieve such impossibilities is the result which, as we have seen, has already followed—the result that those who attempt such tasks are perpetually driven backward and forward between intolerable horror on the one hand and intolerable unreality on the other, finding nowhere a stable resting place for their feet.

It is no wonder then that after beginning with an impossible description of the situation caused by sin, after encountering two additional impossibilities in its endeavours to describe what God did in view of that situation, the expiatory theory should end by having to confess that it cannot comply with the third requirement at all; it cannot show how it is that what God was supposed to do effected the end supposed to be sought. It has no note of jubilant and solemn gladness to sound, such as surely ought to be sounded by one who has really entered into the mind of God and found the secret meaning of His wondrous work of grace. Rather it comes to the close of its exposition of the Cross with a sense of sadness and gloom.

"Mystery," it sighs, "all is mystery. We cannot understand. These things are wholly beyond our human knowledge." Thus Dr. Crawford, one of the most candid, as well as one of the ablest expositors of the expiatory theory, near the close of his book says, "It is quite possible that none of the considerations referred to may, in the judgment of some persons, be regarded as tending to explain the efficacy of the Atonement."¹ But what then? Allowing that the doctrine were a mystery of which no satisfactory explanation can be given, still, this incomprehensible doctrine is found in the Scriptures, or at least it seems to Dr. Crawford to be found there; and it is no wonder that it should be incomprehensible because "the permission and the wide prevalence of sin" are equally incomprehensible, and besides, "it is a matter with which God is more concerned than we are"!

Thus, almost confessedly, the expiatory theory shows itself utterly unable to comply with the third and crucial requirement of a clear and satisfying explanation of the Cross. It cannot show in the slightest degree how the action that God was supposed by the theory to take served to overcome the difficulties and ward off the dangers that were supposed by the theory to exist. The connection between the supposed action and the supposed result is left in utter mystery. We are therefore entitled to say that the expiatory theory utterly fails to do the work of an explanation—it utterly fails to bring light out of darkness—it leaves the darkness greater than ever. It utterly fails to draw forth intelligible and inspiring Truth out of uncomprehended mystery. It utterly fails to render more clear and

¹ *The Atonement*, p. 450.

impressive before the mind and conscience of man the wisdom and holiness and love of God. And because it utterly fails to do this, while yet it professes to be the true explanation of the Cross and is therefore under obligation to do this very thing, therefore it acts in reality as a great stumbling-block standing in the way of thoughtful and earnest men and keeping them back from the Christian faith. It makes God, and the Son of God, and the apostles of Christ, and the Scriptures responsible for contradictions, fictions, and absurdities, with which they have in reality nothing whatever to do, and for which the expiatory theory, because of its fundamental error in describing the work of redemption as an achievement of impossibilities, is wholly and solely responsible.

We conclude, therefore, that it is not the case that Anselm, the Roman Catholic prelate, great and good man though he was, was a man so almost supernaturally great as to be capable of preparing for the Protestant Church, four hundred years before it came into existence, a substantially accurate explanation of the problem of the Cross. We conclude that it is not the case that four hundred years before the Protestant Church had settled the question whether it is faith alone, apart from works, that justifies, this Roman Catholic prelate had found the correct answer to the far deeper question, "*Why is it that the faith which alone justifies does justify the believer in Christ?*" We conclude that the Reformers were *not* being true to their own principles when they took over from Roman Catholicism and adopted as their own the Roman Catholic explanation of the Cross. We conclude

that those Protestant theologians who have felt repelled by that explanation and have sought to find a better and more worthy shrine for the gospel of the grace of God in Christ were actuated by a true instinct, and were greatly and bravely serving the cause of truth by the protests which from time to time they have raised against the expiatory theory.

On the other hand, it is not to be denied that many of these protests have been rash and violent, and the attempts at reconstruction made by the protestors have failed to do justice to the great truths which the expiatory theory in the past has guarded—the authority of the Scriptures and the unique Saviourhood of Christ. The task which now lies before us is to inquire whether, when we have carefully and humbly endeavoured to clear our minds of all preconceived ideas, when we have set before ourselves without reserve all the data furnished us by the Scriptures and availed ourselves of the suggestions for guidance gained in our criticism of the expiatory theory, there does not naturally rise up before our minds an explanation of the Cross which complies with all the requirements of a true explanation, and affords the key by which all the diverse utterances of the Scriptures are rendered plainly intelligible and harmonious.

PART II.—CONSTRUCTIVE.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CONDITIONS OF DIVINE MERCY—UNFULFILLABLE BY SINFUL MAN.

“EITHER the Death of Christ was the Atonement for human sin,” says Dr. Dale, “or else it fills me with terror and despair.”¹ We have rejected the expiatory theory of the death of Christ. Must we therefore be filled with terror and despair?

If the death of Christ happened because God could not prevent it, if the death of Christ was really a triumph for the powers of evil, then assuredly nothing else is possible but terror and despair. Then we are confronted with the vision of a feeble God who has called into existence forces greater than He can control—some lesser God, who has indeed made this world, but had not power to shape it as He would—some weak, effeminate God whose mild amiability is quite unable to contend against the grim and savage forces which His creative energy has let loose in His universe. If we find such an idea intolerable, then we must believe and be able to show that the death of Christ happened under the sovereignty of God and served His wise and holy and loving purposes.

The problem, therefore, which we have now to

¹ *The Atonement*, p. 63.

face is this, "Can we, without help from the expiatory theory, without resorting to the hypothesis that the death of Christ was necessary in order to satisfy the retributive justice of God, can we, first of all, 'so describe the situation caused in the world by the entrance of sin as to show that a work of redemption on the part of God—a work carried out by the Incarnate Son of God—was both necessary and possible'?"

If the great mountain barrier which was supposed to shut men off from the Kingdom of God, and through which Jesus Christ was supposed at the cost of His life to have cleft a way, proves to be merely a mountain of clouds which the rising sun has dissipated, then was there no real barrier at all, was there a plain and easy access open to the Kingdom of God all the while, and was there, therefore, no necessity that Christ should die to open up a way of salvation? Or, behind the cloud-barrier which men had imaginèd was there not all the while a real barrier—of which God was aware though men were not—different indeed from that which the sin-darkened fancy of man had conceived, but equally impassable by sinful men, equally requiring that a way of salvation should be opened up through it at the cost of the life of the Incarnate Son of God? If the expiatory theory be rejected these are the only two possible alternatives. If we accept the former alternative we must completely discard the authority of the Scriptures, and completely renounce the Saviourhood of Christ. If we accept the latter alternative, as according to our assumptions we must, then we must proceed to describe this real barrier which lay in the way of the

salvation of sinners, and which could be overcome only by the death of Jesus Christ.

If God did not require a satisfaction to His retributive justice as a preliminary to forgiveness, then what other obstacle lay in the way of sinful man's forgiveness? If there was always mercy in the heart of God towards sinful man, then what prevented that mercy from flowing freely forth? Why could not God forgive us sinful men just as we sinful men forgive each other? The answer is found in the truth that God's mercy is and ever must be *holy* mercy.

To say that God's mercy is holy mercy is to say that God's mercy is itself under law—that it can manifest itself only under conditions. Where these conditions are not complied with there God's mercy cannot find an outlet. When we see what these conditions are then we also see that sinful man can never of himself comply with them. Therefore even though there is mercy eternally in God, and even though God requires no satisfaction to His retributive justice before He can show mercy, yet the mercy of God must remain eternally unavailable for sinful man unless, through the mediatorship of a Saviour from sin, he is enabled to comply with the conditions which God's holiness must always impose upon God's mercy. Through the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ, which found its climax on the Cross of Calvary, believers in Christ are enabled to comply with these conditions.

This is the thesis which we must now endeavour to establish. And first, it is necessary to ascertain what are the conditions which God's holiness im-

poses upon God's mercy. To this end let us ask first of all, "What are the conditions which any self-respecting man will impose in connection with his own bestowals of forgiveness?" He will certainly require two things of any brother man who has sinned against him. He will require repentance. And he will require faith. In this repentance he will demand at least three elements. There must be a sincere acknowledgment that the law which had to be broken before he could be injured was a righteous law, and that it was wrong to break it—there must be a sincere acknowledgment of the personal guilt of the sinner—and there must be a sincere intention to amend and be obedient in the future to the law which the sin had broken in the past. A repentance containing these three elements will be acknowledged among sinful men as a genuine and valid repentance. Such a repentance indicates that the sinner, although he sinned, has now an approximately right attitude towards the *law* which he has broken.

But along with this repentance there must also go faith—faith on the part of the sinner that he who has been sinned against is willing to forgive, and faith that in forgiving he, too, is paying respect to the broken law—that he forgives, not merely as one who suffers from a personal injury done to himself, but also as one who suffers from and righteously resents the offence committed against the law in his person. Such a faith indicates that the sinner has now an approximately right feeling towards the *man* against whom he sinned, and in asking him to forgive is not asking him to dishonour himself by conniving at an evasion of the

law. Many human repentances and forgivenesses fall far below the standard here indicated; yet every man who has a true respect for himself as a moral being will recognise that this is a standard with which, in bestowing forgiveness, he ought to comply. No self-respecting man will feel called upon to extend forgiveness where these conditions are not complied with. He may be willing and longing to extend forgiveness, but he knows that he cannot do so in reality unless the sinner offers to him a sincere repentance and believes that he who is asked to forgive will still, in extending forgiveness, preserve a true regard for the violated law.

Now if such be the conditions which self-respecting men feel constrained to place upon *their* bestowals of forgiveness, what conditions may God be expected to place upon the bestowal of *His* forgiveness? Shall we answer, "Exactly the same conditions"? Are we to forget that the most self-respecting of men is still a sinful man, and that God is the God of perfect holiness? Are we to forget that in our forgiveness of each other we set the standard of sincerity according to our own measures—that is according to the measures of men who are all alike tainted with sin? We accept the repentance and the faith that are offered to us by those who sin against us without inquiring too closely into their depth and reality. Why? Because we know that we could not endure too close an examination into our own repentances, and we know that we are not worthy of a perfect faith. We know that when we describe our own repentances as being true we are speaking of a relative and not an absolute truth. We are speaking of them as being

true enough to pass muster in a world of men who are all tainted with sin, but not as being perfectly true and sincere.

And we know also that when we are speaking of the faith that is due to us as men who, in forgiving sin, would not out of mere lax indulgence be false to the claims of the law, we are speaking of a relative and not an absolute thing. Some degree of faith is due to us if we are men of good character, but we know right well that a perfect faith is more than we deserve, because we are all of us capable of being, in our forgiveness, false in some degree to the claims of the law of righteousness.

When we remember these things we see that the answer to the question, "What conditions must God impose in bestowing forgiveness?" must be, "The same conditions that self-respecting men impose, with this infinite difference, that God must demand, not a relatively true repentance and a relatively genuine faith, but a *perfect repentance* and a *perfect faith*."

The holy God who has no sin of which He requires to repent, and who is worthy of the most absolute faith, cannot be true to His own holiness, He would have to deny himself did He, in bestowing forgiveness, demand anything less than the perfect repentance and the perfect faith to which He is entitled. He cannot, without denying Himself, consent to receive as adequate such altogether imperfect repentance and such dubious faith as we sinful men offer to each other and to Him. Already, therefore, we begin to see looming up before us the great impassable mountain barrier which shuts sinful men off from the Kingdom of God. As

“natural men” we can repent and believe, but not with any such repentance or faith as God is able to accept. Such repentance and such faith as we are able of ourselves to attain is not indeed wholly valueless, but yet wholly valueless as a means in itself of qualifying us to become the recipients of God’s most holy mercy.

And the more we consider this great barrier, the higher and the more impassable it becomes. The All-holy and Omniscient God sees every sin that man commits, not as man the sinner sees it, that is with a most limited view of its ultimate consequences. God sees that sin in the light of its most far-reaching consequences—in the light of the consequences which would follow did He not continually check and restrain it, that is in the light of consequences which never do actually follow and never to all eternity will be permitted to follow—and which no man or angel could ever realise, but which, as we shall see, there is reason to believe would signify the destruction of the universe and the annihilation of God Himself.

And seeing sin in this light, God judges sin to be worthy of death. That God does thus regard sin He has told us in the Scriptures in language perfectly unmistakable. Throughout the whole Bible runs the solemn warning, “The wages of sin is death.” Therefore, in order that we should offer to God a God-acceptable repentance, it would be required of us that we should come before God confessing, believing, and realising that our darling sin—that which is in our eyes but a puny, insignificant, easily excusable sin—is in real fact an offence against God which justly renders us liable to the

doom of death. Here then is an obstacle to forgiveness utterly insuperable by the natural man.

But this is only one-half of the obstacle. In addition to the God-acceptable repentance, there must also be the God-acceptable faith. That is to say, at the very same time that we are required to confess, believe, and realise that God regards sin as so infinitely more serious than we naturally regard it, we are also required to believe that God in forgiving this sin which appears to Him so infinitely more guilty than it appears to us, does not in the slightest degree relax His utter hatred of sin, nor in the slightest degree forfeit His own perfect holiness. Now to attain simply to the repentance required is of itself impossible to the natural man. And to attain simply to the faith required is of itself impossible to the natural man. But to attain to the repentance and the faith required *in one and the same spiritual act*, is, if we may so speak, a *double impossibility*, for the more the natural man succeeds in viewing sin as God views it, and feeling it to be death-worthy, the less he will naturally be able to believe that God, in consistency with His holiness, can be able to forgive it; while on the other hand, the more he persuades himself that God can forgive his sin the less he will naturally be able to view sin as God views it, and feel it to be death-worthy.

But even yet we have not measured the full impassability of this great barrier. We have still further to remember that the moment man sins, in that moment God begins to pay him his wages. God does not immediately pay him his wages in full. Sin only brings death when sin is full-grown. But immediately a measure of the full punishment

—the first fruits or earnest of the full punishment—does fall upon the sinner. In his own spiritual nature he experiences that punishment in the blindness that falls upon his soul, in the feeling of alienation from God, in the sense of misery and ill-desert, and shame. Then sooner or later comes the external and more visible punishment, which is never in this world a complete or full manifestation of God's holy anger, but which is a dim and imperfect adumbration through the natural order of things of that holy and unspeakably terrible anger of God against sin which has never yet in human history been fully manifested.

Now this partial punishment of sin inflicted by God through the natural order of things in the exercise of His unremitting sovereignty of Kingship, has in itself no power to turn the sinner from his sin. On the contrary, because this partial punishment affects his whole nature, *blinding his spiritual vision*, as well as bringing shame to his conscience and misery to his heart and suffering to his body, therefore this partial punishment of itself places the sinner entirely beyond the possibility of so profiting by it as to qualify himself for becoming a recipient of God's mercy. He cannot be a sinner and not a sinner at one and the same time. He cannot view his own sin except with a sinner's eyes, and *the sinner's eyes are always, and necessarily, in a measure, spiritually blind*. Because of this God-inflicted spiritual blindness he can never see sin as God sees it.

This spiritual blindness is different from physical blindness, inasmuch as it may exist and yet the subject of it be wholly unconscious of its existence.

It has this peculiar, subtle, and fatal characteristic, that it permits those who are blinded by it to think that they see. The sinful man who is afflicted by this spiritual blindness always and inevitably judges wrongly of spiritual things. He simply cannot discern aright the things of God. Even when he thinks that he has discovered his first mistakes—and that he has become at last aware of his blindness, and that his eyes are now opened—even then he is only passing into a more hopeless stage of his blindness, which means a still nearer approach to spiritual death.

The first effect of this spiritual blindness is to cause the sinner to take an unduly light and oversanguine view of his sin. It is not that his sin does not bring him grievous pangs of remorse, not that his soul is not shaken with guilty fears, not that he does not earnestly seek to repent and pray to God for mercy. He may have all these experiences, and yet take an unduly light and oversanguine view of his sin. His error lies in thinking that any repentance of his own, or any faith of his own, can ever avail to bring him back to true communion with God. His repentance may be in a measure sincere and his faith may be in a measure genuine, but if he were not spiritually blind he would know that nothing but an absolutely perfect repentance and an absolutely perfect faith, such as he cannot possibly offer to God, would alone be acceptable to the All-holy God. Instead of offering to God what God requires he offers to God a repentance and a faith such as he would offer to his sinful fellow-men, and tries to persuade himself that his offering is accepted—tries to take his forgive-

ness for granted, and since, in real fact, he is *not* forgiven, he stumbles forward into greater and deeper sin. And as he does so, he exposes himself yet more to that partial punishment of sin which God inflicts on sinful men through the natural order of things. External punishments of sin become more pronounced and unmistakable, and as a consequence the sinner's guilty fears increase. He is brought nearer to the point of seeing that if he himself does not regard sin as death-worthy, yet God does. But at the same time his spiritual blindness increases also, and he comes to have less and less of a true knowledge of what God really requires of him. He offers to God atonements and expiations of his own, which are still further away from what God requires of him than his former attempts at repentance were. Then finding himself still unforgiven—still stumbling forward in the fatal path of sin—he enters upon the second stage of the fatal process. Despair enters his soul. He comes to deem his case hopeless. And with despair comes unbelief. He begins to question whether there be a God of holiness at all. And in his unbelief he gives himself yet more fully and unreservedly up to sin, until at last he is found wallowing in iniquity with scarcely more than a glimmer of knowledge that his sin is sinful at all, or that there is any God of holiness to whom his sin is an unspeakable abomination.

Where then, in all this tragic process, is there any room for sinful man to turn of himself to God with a God-acceptable repentance and a God-acceptable faith? Not at the beginning, for there, if man's spiritual blindness is slight, he is all the more, on

that account, unconscious of the existence of any blindness whatsoever. And there, if man's sin is but a little, immature sin, yet also God's external punishments of his sin through the natural order of things are but partial and comparatively unimpressive. Could we expect a child who has told one of the common lies of childhood and been detected and punished with a few light strokes of the rod to deduce for himself, without help or warning from others, from this solitary personal experience of sin and its results, that the final result of that lie is death? We could not reasonably entertain any such expectation. And with no more reason could we expect the natural man from his own first experiences of sin to attain of himself to a God-acceptable repentance.

Just as certainly there is no room for sinful man to turn to God at the end of this process with a God-acceptable repentance and faith, for then the blindness and deadness of his soul are so complete that all true knowledge of sin and of God has vanished. We might as reasonably expect the degraded savage in some barbarous island to deduce for himself, out of his own personal experience of sin and its fruits, those truths which, even with the aid of the Christian revelation, the most discerning Christians can but dimly apprehend. And if, at the beginning and the end of this process of the bringing forth of the natural and inevitable results of sin, there is no room for man to turn of himself to God with a God-acceptable repentance and faith, then neither is there room for him to do so at any stage of the process between the beginning and the end. The conclusion, therefore, which we are com-

pelled to draw is that once man has embarked on a course of sin, even though he began with what may seem a very little sin, then unless God Himself comes to man's rescue in a way altogether transcending His dealing with man through the natural order of things, man is doomed to spiritual death, even though it be said that all that was required of him was that he should turn to God with a God-acceptable repentance and faith. There is, in all verity, a flaming sword at the gate of man's lost Paradise—a flaming sword of God which, "turning every way, keeps the way of the tree of life."¹

That this account of the situation caused in the world by sin is in accord with the teaching of Scriptures—that the Scriptures concur in testifying that a God-acceptable repentance and faith are impossible of attainment by sinful man of himself, and that it was in order to make such a God-acceptable repentance and faith possible to man that Jesus gave Himself up to the death of the Cross—is made manifest in many passages. Thus, in Acts v. 31, we read, "Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins." And again, in Acts xi. 18, "Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life." And again in 2 Tim. ii. 25, "If peradventure God may give them repentance unto knowledge of the truth." In these passages a God-acceptable repentance is expressly stated to be not the acquirement of man, but the gift of God—the gift of God through Christ—the Christ who died and rose again. Then in regard to "faith," we read in Acts iii. 16, "Yea,

¹ Gen. iii. 24.

the faith that is through Him (that is Christ) hath given him (that is this lame man) this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." And in Gal. iii. 23, "But before faith came we were kept in ward under the law." Faith *came*—sent of God through Christ. Man did not bring it or attain to it of himself. Again in Heb. xii. 2, "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of faith." And in Eph. ii. 8, "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God." From these passages it is sufficiently plain that the Scriptures do not represent man as being able, of himself and apart from the crucified Christ, to attain to a God-acceptable repentance and faith. It is true that the Scriptures resound with calls to men to repent and believe, and a hasty student of the Word may easily fall into the error of supposing that the Scriptures assume that man is perfectly well able of himself to furnish to God a God-acceptable repentance and faith. For that matter the Scriptures also resound with calls to men to do the works of righteousness, yet we do not on that account assume that man is able of himself to present to God a God-acceptable righteousness. When we take into account the whole teaching of the Scriptures in regard to the point, then we see that these calls to repentance and faith are given in view of the fact that the Cross is either about to come or has come, and that it is through the Cross alone that any adequate response to these calls can be possibly given.

And now we may describe by means of a simile the point we have reached in our investigation. In obedience to the guidance of the Scriptures, we have

followed the path which leads in the direction of the Bridge of Salvation. When we came to that point on the path where the expiatory theory warned us to look for the great gulf separating sinful man from the Kingdom of God, we found no gulf at all, but solid ground hidden by folds of dense dark mist. Pushing through that mist, not perhaps without some natural tremblings of the spirit, we have come out on the further side, and there we have found the great abyss yawning of which the expiatory theory had given us such an inaccurate and impossible account—the abyss for ever unbridgeable by sinful man—the *abyss of the inexorable conditions of God's most holy mercy*—the abyss into which sinful man may cast all his repentances and vows and resolutions and acts of atonement and expiation, without by a single hair's-breadth diminishing the fathomless depths of the gulf. It was here, across this bottomless abyss, for ever impassable by sinful man in himself—here where alone it was needed, and where alone it could possibly be built, that Jesus Christ, the Holy Son of God, at the cost of His infinitely precious life, built the great Bridge of Salvation for the sinful race of men.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CONDITIONS OF DIVINE MERCY—FULFILLABLE THROUGH THE CHRIST.

IN the foregoing chapter we complied with the first requirement of a satisfying explanation of the Cross in so far as to describe the situation caused in the world by the entrance of sin so as to show that a work of redemption on the part of God was *necessary*. We have now to show that this work of redemption was *possible* to God through Christ.

If then, let us ask, the situation caused by sin was really that which has been described, if through the entrance of sin man was entangled in such a coil of disastrous consequences that never of himself could he present to God a God-acceptable repentance and faith, and if God could not, without denying Himself, extend forgiveness to man without such a repentance and faith, was it possible for God through Christ so to deal with this situation as to secure the salvation of man?

That it was possible for God to become man, that as a matter of historical fact God did become man, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, is here taken for granted. That through the Incarnation of the Eternal Son in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, God found what He had never possessed before in His dealings with men, a perfect human representative of Himself on earth, may also be assumed. But

that God, even through a sinless representative, should be able to deal effectively with the situation caused by sin as we have described it, seems at first sight to be impossible. For if sinful man cannot turn to God with a God-acceptable repentance, neither can the Sinless Man who is constituted by the Incarnation *repent* in the stead of sinful man. The Sinless Man cannot have aught whereof to repent. Repentance is a human experience from which, by the very nature of the case, He is excluded. Repentance involves personal sin, and the Sinless Man never sins. If He did sin He would cease to be a perfect representative of God. If He does not sin He cannot be spoken of with truth as repenting. Therefore it seems as though even the Incarnation of the Eternal Son of God in Jesus of Nazareth could not result in the salvation of man. It seems as though the Sinless Man could only appear side by side with sinful men, with the result simply of revealing more clearly than ever the great impassable gulf fixed between them. The situation appears to be as hopeless and impossible as ever.

But to reach such a conclusion from such premises is to allow ourselves to be deceived by merely verbal ambiguities. We use the word "repentance" to describe a certain degree of love of righteousness and hatred of sin to which a sinful man is able to attain when he turns away in loathing from his sin. Since all ordinary men are sinners, therefore there is no ordinary man who does not come into possession of whatever love of righteousness and hatred of sin he possesses, except by the way of repentance, except by turning away from a

state of sin in which he has been personally implicated towards a state of righteousness which is ever above and beyond him. Therefore we can never say of any man that he "repents" without implying that the man spoken of has been a sinner. Nevertheless, when we say that a man repents, the fact that we emphasise concerning him is not that he is a sinner, though that is true, but that although he is a sinner he does, in a measure, hate sin, and does, in a measure, love righteousness. The essential thing, therefore, in repentance is not the fact of sin, but the existence in the nature of a certain imperfect measure of the *hatred* of sin and the *love* of righteousness.

The next point for us to notice is that there is no necessity that a being should be guiltily implicated in sin in order to hate it. On the contrary, those who are in any degree subject to sin can never hate sin with a perfect hatred. It is only an entirely holy being who can do so, for only such a being can see sin as it really is. It requires, therefore, an entirely holy being to do that perfectly which sinful man does only imperfectly when he repents, namely to hate sin with a perfect hatred and to love righteousness with a perfect love. We possess, however, no single word in the English language which expresses a *holy* being's love of righteousness and hatred of sin in the same way that the word "repentance" expresses a *sinful* being's love of righteousness and hatred of sin. And it is very largely owing to this somewhat trivial circumstance—this defect in our language—that the difficulty arises which is expressed by saying that if sinful man cannot of himself attain to a God-acceptable

repentance, then neither can the Sinless Man experience a God-acceptable repentance on his behalf. Necessarily, the Sinless Man's experience cannot by any possibility be called a "repentance." To call it such would be to degrade the Sinless Man to the level of ordinary sinful men. But the experience of the Sinless Man, while remaining sinless throughout, may be an experience which produces true and adequate repentance amongst sinful men. It may be an experience in which a perfect human love of righteousness and a perfect human hatred of sin are acquired and manifested—an experience which may qualify the Sinless Man for becoming the Communicator of His own perfect human love of righteousness and perfect human hatred of sin to sinful men whose own love of righteousness and hatred of sin are altogether inadequate and impotent.

Thus when we seize upon the spiritual realities underlying the word "repentance," we see that the difficulties conjured up by the use of that word are entirely imaginary. We see that when the Son of God becomes incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, a great prospect of hope has opened up for sinful men—for a Man has appeared in the world capable of meeting the demand of God, capable of acquiring and manifesting a perfect human hatred of sin and a perfect human love of righteousness, and capable also of communicating His own perfect human hatred of sin and love of righteousness to those sinful human beings who have it not and are perishing for the lack of it.

That Jesus Himself was conscious of no such difficulty as we have here been dealing with is

evident from His action in submitting to the baptism of John the Baptist. The baptism of John was the baptism of repentance. John felt a difficulty in baptising Jesus, but Jesus felt none in being baptised by John. "Suffer it now," He said, "for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."¹ Jesus, in submitting to that baptism, acknowledged no sin of His own. In so far as personal confession of guilt was concerned, He had no part in it. But in so far as holy hatred of sin and holy love of righteousness was concerned—and this was the essential meaning of the baptism of John—He was better qualified to be identified with that baptism than any man on earth, not excluding John himself. In submitting Himself to that baptism Jesus was publicly consecrating Himself to His great vocation, for, for this very cause had He come to the world, to make possible for sinful man the attainment of that God-acceptable repentance without which he could never enter the Kingdom of God, and to which he of himself could never attain.

The somewhat similar difficulty which emerges in connection with the "faith" which God requires of sinful men is met in a somewhat similar fashion. It might be said that if sinful man cannot turn to God with a God-acceptable faith, then neither can the Sinless Man "believe" in the stead of sinful man. For just as the use of the word "repentance" involves the implication that he of whom the word is used is a sinner, so the use of the word "faith" involves the implication that he of whom the word is used is liable to doubt and spiritual ignorance. Where faith is perfect, where there is no vestige of

¹ Matt. iii. 15.

doubt or spiritual ignorance left, there faith is no longer faith. It is spiritual knowledge. It is swallowed up in "spiritual sight." Where there is assured spiritual knowledge there is not only no room for any trace of doubt, but also there is no longer any necessity or room for faith.

Now the Sinless Man has assured spiritual knowledge. At every stage in His career He knows all that He requires to know, and His knowledge is of such a character that no falsehood or delusion or mere probability ever establishes itself in His consciousness as Truth. The Sinless Man never merely believes. He always knows. He never doubts. If He did doubt He would cease to be the Sinless Man, for doubt is always, however obscure the link of connection may be, the result of sin.

It might seem, therefore, that since the Sinless Man never merely believes He could never come to the help of sinful man, whose great need is a God-acceptable faith such as he of himself can never attain. But the truth is exactly contrary. It is true that the Sinless Man does not live a life of faith, at least in the ordinary sense of the word, but rather a life of spiritual knowledge, but just on that very account He is able to declare the truth with certainty, authority, and assurance, and so produce in sinful man that all-essential, God-acceptable faith which, when it attains its culmination, ceases to be any longer merely faith, but is transmuted into certain and assured spiritual knowledge.

Thus, in connection with the forgiveness of sins, the Sinless Man knows that God, in forgiving, forgives that which is utterly hateful to His own holy nature, and never relaxes in the slightest degree

from His inexorable antagonism to sin; and this knowledge of the Sinless Man becomes God-acceptable faith in such sinful men as are united by their faith to their Redeemer, but whose faith as yet has not been transmuted into certain and assured spiritual knowledge. For this end also came the Son of God to our world, that He might make possible for man the attainment of a God-acceptable faith.

There is indeed a condition of things conceivable in which the salvation of sinful man would have been impossible even for the Incarnate Son of God. If the fall of man had been as complete and utter as it has been sometimes represented to be by theologians who had no fear before their eyes of describing Christ as achieving impossibilities; if, in the race of man, sin had been suffered to work out its *final* result, so that not merely the whole of man's nature had been affected by sin as it truly was, but also the image of God in man had been completely destroyed; if there had been nothing of "God's own" left in man, and man had become a race of human demons, irrevocably hardened in wickedness, then indeed it would have been impossible, even for the Incarnate Son of God, to have brought such a race under the sovereignty of God's love and holiness. There would have been nothing in such a race to which He could have addressed any spiritual appeal. Nowhere could He have made so much as a beginning of a work of spiritual regeneration.

And also, we may add, nowhere could God have found a worthy motive for attempting such a task. God had a worthy motive for seeking the salvation

of man. He came forth in Christ seeking that which was "His own." God loves that which is "His own" always, and He loves nothing that is "not His own." God never does and never can love aught that is in itself sinful. Dr. Denney's statement that God's work of redemption means "that God is taking part with us against Himself,"¹ is unscriptural and inadmissible. God can never take part with any creature against Himself. If it were possible for God so to do, it would mean, not the redemption, but the ruin of that creature. If there had been nothing lovable in man, then God never could have loved man, for true love can love only that which is truly lovable. But in man, all sinful as he was, God found something of "His own" to love, namely the dying spirituality of the natural man—the potential son of God in the natural man—the spark of the divine which all the disastrous consequences of sin had never been able wholly to quench. It was only for the sake of that flickering, dying, yet sacred spark, that the race of man was, by the mercy of God, kept alive. For man as a potential fiend God has no love. He has but the consuming fire of His most holy anger.

The position then in which man stood when God came forth for his salvation in Jesus Christ was this: Man was spiritually dying. So far as his own efforts were concerned he was as good as spiritually dead. Yet in reality, though spiritually dying and utterly unable to save himself from spiritual death, he was not wholly dead. He could still, though in a pitifully inadequate fashion, hate sin. He could still, though in a pitifully inadequate fashion, love righteousness. He was in

¹ *Studies in Theology*, p. 111.

absolute need of a Saviour. Yet he was not beyond the possibility of being saved.

And now, before proceeding to comply with the second requirement of a satisfying explanation of the Cross, and describing accurately what God did through Christ in view of the situation caused by sin, let us endeavour, by the aid of an illustration, to set clearly before our minds the whole situation on its human side with which God had to deal.

A traveller is following a path down the slope of a mountain. The path ends in a fearful precipice. The whole mountain side is enveloped in dense folds of mist. The traveller cannot discern whither his path is leading. He moves onward towards apparently certain death. Then one who partly understands the traveller's peril cries, "O that some wind of God would arise and blow aside this mist, that the traveller may see his peril and be saved." And a wind arises and blows aside the mist, and the precipice at the end of the path comes plainly into view. Yet, strange to say, the traveller still continues on his path of death.

Then another, who understands yet better the traveller's peril, cries, "This traveller is blind. The mist is gone and still he does not see. There is a film upon his eyes. O that some power of God would take that fatal film away, that he may see his danger and be saved." Then, as it were, scales fall from the traveller's eyes, and he beholds the gulf before him. Yet, strange to say, though now he moves more slowly, he still moves on upon the downward path.

Then another, who understands the full nature of the traveller's peril, cries, "This traveller has no

power over himself. He sees, but he is unable to profit by his seeing. The power of earthly gravitation is too strong for him. In his own strength he can only descend. He is utterly unable to ascend. O that some power of God may enter into his being, and infusing into his nature a new life, furnish a new strength to his limbs. Then we shall behold him retracing his steps and ascending in safety to the mountain peaks."

This apologue may help us to understand the three-fold need of man. First: Man is enveloped in a mist of spiritual ignorance. He does not and cannot know the truth. His nearest approximation to the truth is still distant by an infinity from the real truth. His nearest approach to the truth is to come to think, in his blind presumption, that what God requires of him as a condition of acceptance with God is that he shall furnish a perfect obedience to the will of God. He does not know that his own spiritual impotence is so immeasurably greater than he himself supposes, that he cannot, however ardently he may desire to do so, even repent of his transgressions in a God-acceptable fashion. It is manifest that unless this spiritual ignorance is removed, unless the real truth is communicated to man, then man cannot be saved.

It does not follow, however, that the saving of man involves merely the communicating to him of the truth. As a matter of fact such is not the case, for, in the second place, man has no power in himself to generate a true faith in the truth. Even when the truth is uttered in his ears he cannot of himself believe it. He can only believe what his own seared conscience permits him to believe, and a

seared conscience does not permit a man to believe spiritual truth. The searing of the conscience has first to be dealt with and removed before his conscience will suffer him to accept the truth.

Then, in the third place, even supposing this second difficulty to be overcome, another and still greater difficulty has to be met. Even though he believes the truth, sinful man is utterly unable, of himself, to avail himself of it. He has no power within himself of generating a God-acceptable repentance. He cannot by any possibility force himself to hate sin as God requires him to hate it, nor to love righteousness with the perfect love with which God requires him to love it. His own experience of sin can never teach him to hate sin with a perfect hatred, for the more he experiences of the bitter fruits of sin, the more also he falls under that spiritual blindness and callousness which is the most immediate and fatal of all the results of sin.

We see then that it was with a three-fold need in man that Jesus came to deal. He came to deal with the spiritual ignorance, the spiritual blindness, and the spiritual impotence which are the inevitable and invariable result of the reaction of God, through the natural order of things, upon a sinful nature. When the Eternal Son of God appeared in this world as the child of the Holy Spirit and of Mary, He came to grapple with the spiritual ignorance, blindness, and impotence which are the fatal and certain precursors of spiritual death in man, and with which man in his own strength is utterly and for ever unable to cope. If Christ the Saviour had not come to save, then for sinful man there could have been no salvation.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOLY RESENTMENT OF JESUS.

WE have now described the situation caused in the world by the entrance of sin so as to show that a work of redemption on the part of God was both necessary and possible. Such a work of redemption we have seen was necessary, not because God needed to be changed so as to be made merciful, not because God required as a preliminary to forgiveness that a satisfaction should be made to His retributive justice, but because the mercy which is eternally in God is and must always be holy mercy, and in its outgoing must always observe the conditions of perfectly holy mercy, that is must always demand from those to whom mercy is shown a perfect repentance and a perfect faith.

With these demands man can never of himself comply. The God-inflicted punishment of his sin, through the natural order of things, for ever prevents him from complying with them. So long as he is a sinner he can never, because of the inevitable and inexorable effects of sin upon his nature, see sin as God must demand that he shall see it, nor believe in God as God must demand to be believed in.

We have also seen that this work of redemption, for ever impossible to sinful man himself, is not

impossible to the Sinless Son of God become incarnate. It is true that the Son of God who becomes the Sinless Man cannot Himself repent, but He can undergo an experience in humanity which may be the cause amongst sinful men of a saving repentance issuing finally in sinlessness, and of a saving faith issuing finally in perfect knowledge of God.

We have now to describe the nature of this experience of the Son of God incarnate; we have to exhibit the human experience of the Christ as being capable of producing a saving repentance and a saving faith amongst sinful men, and thus qualifying Him to become the Eternal High Priest and Saviour of humanity. In order that we may do this effectively it is necessary, first of all, to clear away the misconceptions engendered by the expiatory theory of the Cross.

We have already seen how the expiatory theory in its endeavour to represent the Cross as a satisfaction to God's retributive justice ignores the truth of the Crime of the Crucifixion. It shuts its eyes to the plain fact that the men who crucified Jesus were wicked men who in crucifying the Lord were defying God to the uttermost. It then represents these wicked men as being the vehicles through whom God's condemnation of sin was conveyed to and took effect upon the Sinless Christ. It further represents Christ as recognising in the treatment meted out to Him by these wicked men God's condemnation of sin, and therefore as submitting to this treatment in a patient meekness, in which there was not and could not be the slightest trace of resentment. In short, the expiatory theory sees in the Crucifixion of Christ, God's ideal will being

done in an ideal way. It leaves no room anywhere for the agency of free moral beings who are also wicked men. For all the expiatory theory tells us to the contrary, the Crucifixion of Christ might have happened in heaven and been accomplished by the angels of heaven. Consequently, the expiatory theory leaves no room for the idea that Christ, by His experience in humanity of the treatment of sinful men, gained a human hatred of sin which was perfect as well as human, and being gained under the conditions of human experience, was capable of being communicated to other human beings. And yet this is the idea for which the Scriptures insist that the expiatory theory shall make room.

The expiatory theory, interpreting the career of Christ with prosaic literalness, being blinded by the mist of fatalism to the fact that God's will is not done in this sinful earth as it is done in heaven, sees in all that happened to Christ what God ideally desired to happen, and conceives of Christ as accepting all these happenings as coming to Him directly from the hand of the Father. It therefore conceives of God as imputing sin to Christ and inflicting the penalties of sin upon Christ. It conceives of Christ as offering His patient breast to be the target against which all the arrows of divine wrath might be directed, and as bearing all the unimaginable agonies of such an experience in the spirit of acquiescent submission in which a convicted but penitent criminal or his representative may be supposed to bear the righteous punishment of his sin.

Whereas when we turn to the gospels we find

that this was not at all the spirit in which Christ bore His sufferings. On the contrary, we find that while Jesus always fully recognised that all that happened to Him happened under God's sovereignty of power and wisdom, and was therefore certain in the end to be turned to the service of God's holy purposes, yet He also recognised that the sufferings inflicted upon Him by sinful men were entirely contrary to the ideal will of God, and were in themselves convincing proofs that God did not possess that sovereignty of love and holiness over these men which alone would have enabled them to act as the executors of His holy retributive justice. Never once do we find Jesus speaking or acting in a spirit conformable to the expiatory hypothesis. But continually do we find Him both speaking and acting in a spirit utterly opposed to it. Never once do we find Him acknowledging that the Father's condemnation fell upon Him through the condemnations and other sufferings inflicted upon Him by wicked men. But frequently do we find His holy indignation flashing forth against these wicked men in a way to completely dispel the idea that He bore His sufferings in the spirit of the representative of the penitent and acquiescent criminal.

Whether it be in regard to the sufferings inflicted on Him *before* the Cross, or the suffering *of the Cross itself*, Jesus most plainly shows that He does not regard these sufferings as satisfying the justice of God, but on the contrary as provoking a divine and holy resentment, which, however, expends itself, for the most part, not outwardly on the offenders, but inwardly, within His own spacious

nature, in immeasurable pains of spiritual tension. This divine and holy resentment against sin and the evil wrought upon Himself by sin is kept for the most part in the background of the consciousness of Christ, but enough of it is revealed to make us certain that it was always there, and always there in infinitely greater fulness and force than was ever expressed during His earthly career. The instances of this holy resentment, which we may call "the wrath of the Lamb before the Cross," are found scattered all through the gospels.

Thus in Luke xiii. 10-17, the story is told of the healing on the Sabbath day of the poor woman who was so bowed down by her infirmity that it was impossible for her to stand upright. The ruler of the Synagogue is moved with indignation because this gracious work of healing is done on the Sabbath day. How does Jesus meet that indignation? Is it in the spirit of acquiescent submission, as of one who recognised that in suffering from such unjust anger, He was suffering the divine condemnation of sin? No. He meets it with a nobler and a loftier indignation. "Ye hypocrites," He says, "doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, to have been loosed from this bond on the day of the Sabbath?" And as He said these things all His adversaries were put to shame. Who that read this story for the first time would ever dream of supposing that in encountering and enduring such opposition as this Jesus was satisfying the justice of God? And yet

it was just such opposition as this, carried to its highest pitch, that eventually brought Jesus to the Cross. On the other hand, who can fail to see that in encountering and enduring such opposition as this Jesus was both perfecting His own human experience of the hatefulness of sin and manifesting that hatefulness to sinful men?

Again in Matthew xi. 20, we read, "Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not." And He tells those cities that it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and even for Sodom, in the Day of Judgment than for them. Is it possible to suppose, in view of these words, that Jesus had the faintest glimmer in His mind that these cities of Galilee, in rejecting Him, were co-operating with God in procuring a satisfaction of divine justice? The holy resentment here plainly displayed utterly forbids such an idea.

Or let us take some of the expressions used by the Lord in one of His argumentative controversies with His adversaries. "Ye seek to kill Me, because My word hath not free course in you."¹ "Now ye seek to kill Me, a man that hath told you the truth that I heard from God. This did not Abraham."² "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him."³ "Because I say the truth, ye believe Me not."⁴ "I have not a devil, but I honour my Father and ye dishonour Me."⁵

Can any man who hears these words fail to hear

¹ John viii. 37. ² John viii. 40. ³ John viii. 44.

⁴ John viii. 45. ⁵ John viii. 49.

in them the accent of a divine and holy indignation? And can any man who acknowledges that that accent of holy indignation is there explain why it should be there, if Jesus knew all the while that through these sufferings, which evoked in Him this holy indignation, the retributive justice of His Father was being satisfied? If that which called forth holy indignation in the Son called forth holy satisfaction in the Father, how then is the Son the Revealer of God to man?

If now anyone should make the very unreasonable and illogical statement that the expiatory virtue of the sufferings of Jesus is entirely confined to the sufferings actually endured on the Cross itself, we find that even on this assumption, the very words of Jesus Himself utterly contradict the meaning ascribed by the expiatory theory to the sufferings of Jesus. In Matthew xvii. 12, speaking of John the Baptist, He says, "Elijah is come already and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they listed. Even so shall the Son of Man also suffer of them." Here Jesus distinctly likens His own death to that of John the Baptist. It is not to be supposed for a moment that Jesus meant to imply that John the Baptist's death could mean as much to the world as His own death meant. Jesus was the Son of God incarnate—the Word of God through whom the worlds were created—Jesus was sinless as John the Baptist was not—Jesus had powers of avoiding His doom, which John the Baptist had not—Jesus could be raised from the dead, as John the Baptist could not. The death of Jesus must have meant infinitely more to the world than the death of John the Baptist could possibly

mean. Nevertheless, the words just quoted clearly imply that there was, in spite of the many differences, a real resemblance between the death of John and the death of Jesus.

Now the death of John the Baptist was a martyr's death. His execution was a crime—a flagrant violation of the holy laws of God. The death of Jesus was more than a martyr's death, but if there be any truth in Jesus' own words, it was also genuinely akin to a martyr's death. But the very essence of the martyr's death is this, not that it is brought about directly by God, but that it is brought about by wicked men in flagrant violation of the laws of God. Hence the affirmation of the expiatory theory that the death of Jesus was brought about directly by God, and satisfied the retributive justice of God, is seen to be expressly contradicted by the words of Jesus Himself. Jesus says that His death, however much *more* than a martyr's death it may be, is genuinely akin to a martyr's death. The expiatory theory, not content with affirming the truth that the death of Jesus is *more* than a martyr's death, shoots beyond the truth and in effect *denies* that the death of Jesus is *genuinely akin to a martyr's death at all*.

But if the death of Jesus bears a real resemblance to the death of a martyr, then the feeling of Jesus towards His death must have been in some measure conformable to and harmonious with a martyr's feeling towards his death. Now the martyr's feelings towards his death is not the feeling of the penitent and acquiescent criminal. The martyr does not acquiesce in his own death, in the sense

that he admits that it is justly inflicted. He utterly refuses to be placed in the same category with the justly punished criminal. With whatever calmness and fortitude he endures his death, however much, in a sense, he may welcome it as a means of glorifying God, he yet protests against it as being unjustly inflicted, and appeals to God and to all good men to recognise the injustice of his doom.

Now that Jesus, when He submitted to that death of the Cross which He could so easily have avoided, submitted with feelings conformable to those of the martyr rather than to those of the justly punished and acquiescent criminal, is made clearly manifest in His own utterances. "Are ye come out," He says to the band that comes to take Him prisoner, "as against a robber, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple ye stretched not forth your hands against Me!"¹ It is the Lord's very first care, when the crisis comes, to make it clear that if He is to suffer He does not suffer as an acquiescent and righteously convicted criminal. He has already warned His adversaries again and again of the guilt they will incur in dooming Him to an unjust death. During His pretence of a trial He, for the most part, preserves silence; but His silence is not the silence of acquiescence. It is the silence of dignified protest against the mockery of justice with which He is treated. And when He does break the silence, always in His words is found the martyr's feeling—the manifest recognition that the suffering inflicted on Him is suffering unrighteously inflicted. He challenges the high priest to produce witnesses to any evil words He has ever spoken. He answers

¹ Luke xxii. 52.

the question, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" in the words "I am; and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven."¹ He declares to Pilate, "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice."² As He is being led through the streets of Jerusalem He tells the weeping women "to weep not for Him but for themselves and their children,"³ because of the judgments certain to follow upon the commission of so great a crime. On the Cross itself he prays, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,"⁴ thus demonstrating beyond the possibility of doubt that in the sight of Jesus the wicked men who crucified Him were doing what they ought not to have done; were not obeying God but defying Him; not co-operating with God in securing a satisfaction for His retributive justice, but exposing themselves, in a fashion which only their ignorance prevented from being unspeakably fearful, to the *penalties* of His retributive justice.

The cry of desolation on the Cross—a cry in which the greatest degree of spiritual anguish ever experienced in this world found expression—certainly proves that the death of Jesus was *more* than a martyr's death, but it does not prove that it was *other than* a martyr's death. It is entirely inconsistent with the meaning assigned to the sufferings of Jesus by the expiatory theory. For the cry of desolation is very far from being a cry expressive of a sense of righteous condemnation by God and of submissive acquiescence therein. To be *for-saken* is an infinitely different experience from the

¹ Mark xiv. 62.

² John xviii. 37.

³ Luke xxiii. 28.

⁴ Luke xxiii. 34.

experience of being *condemned*. And to ask, “*Why* am I forsaken?” is a very different thing from the direct statement, “I *am* forsaken, and it is *right* and *just* that I should be forsaken.” If it is plain, as it is, that Jesus experienced an inexpressibly awful sense of being severed from communion with the Father, it is equally plain that He did *not* acquiesce in that experience as being something right and just. He asked “*Why?*” And it is every whit as easy to conceive of the Father answering to the cry of the Son with the words, “My Son, My Son, Alas that I must forsake Thee,” as it is to attribute to Him words expressive of wrath and condemnation. It is every whit as easy to do so, and words fail to declare how much more warrantable. Unless we are to admit that on the Cross the moral unity of the Godhead was broken, that the Father, in redeeming the sinful sons of men, was compelled to deny His Fatherhood towards His only-begotten Son, then we must see in Christ’s experience of desolation, not an experience directly inflicted by the Father and expressive of His wrath, but an experience which represented the last and greatest and most appalling of the effects of sin, which here once, and only once, was permitted by God, for His own wise and holy purposes, to do the worst that it ever will be suffered to do upon the person of His only-begotten Son. Here, as everywhere else, we must interpret the invisible Father’s feeling and attitude through the feeling and attitude of the Son who alone can reveal Him. We shall search in vain for any warrant to justify us in taking any other course. To this subject, however, we shall recur in another place.

In the meantime it is sufficient for our present purpose to note that nowhere in the gospels is the expiatory theory view of the attitude of Christ towards His sufferings confirmed. On the contrary, it is in the gospels most manifestly contradicted. If the gospels are to be suffered to guide us, then it is simply impossible to hold that the patience of Christ was ever at any stage of His career the patience of uncomplaining acquiescence in a just infliction of pain or punishment. His patience was never akin to that of the penitent and acquiescent criminal. It was always akin to that of the martyr. It was never aware of any element of *justice* in its sufferings. It was continually aware of the element of *injustice*.

It has now to be observed further that the influence of the expiatory theory has not only tended to the ignoring of the element of holy resentment so plainly visible in the consciousness of Christ, but it also tends to rob it of its proper weight and value even after it is recognised. It is quite possible for the mind which acknowledges that there is an element of holy resentment in the consciousness of Christ to hold also, for a time, to the idea that through the death of Christ the retributive justice of God was satisfied. The two ideas, however, are mutually incompatible, and to hold to both simply means to deprive each of them of any real force. In proportion as the one idea is emphasised in like proportion must the other be suppressed.

There are two distinct ways by which the conscience of man may be specially impressed with a sense of the august, imperial claims of the law of righteousness. One way is by witnessing the

martyrdom of a good man. The other way is by witnessing the judicial execution of a wicked man. In the former case the shock of horror caused by the *outrage* done to the law of righteousness rouses the conscience to a sense of the value of the law which is thus outraged, and fills it with desire for the vindication of the law, through the honouring of the martyr and the punishment of his persecutors, or the bringing of them to repentance.

In the latter case the conscience is not shocked but *satisfied*, yet it is roused to a sense of the value of the law by the consideration that this satisfaction is gained *at so great a price*—the price of a man's life. It is only by rousing itself to appreciate fully the transcendent value and dignity of the law, that the conscience can reconcile itself to the paying of so great a price for its satisfaction.

In both these ways then the human conscience may be specially impressed with a sense of the transcendent value of the law of righteousness. It ought, however, to be self-evident that the same event cannot possibly impress the human conscience in both these different ways at the same time. If the death is the death of a martyr, then the conscience is impressed through a shock of horror caused by the outrage done to the law. If the death is the death of a criminal, then the conscience is impressed through finding itself satisfied with the payment of this awe-inspiring price—the putting of a human being to death. But the death must be *either* the death of a martyr *or* of a criminal. It cannot be the death *both* of a martyr and of a criminal *at one and the same time*. Opinion amongst the onlookers may be divided. Some may

see in the event the death of a martyr. Others may see in it the death of a criminal. But of these parties one must be right and the other wrong. They cannot both be right. And if any amongst the onlookers try to hold both opinions at the same time, these onlookers simply fail to gain any deep impression from the death at all. To them the sight they witness tends to become devoid of any moral impressiveness whatsoever. Their vision is wrapped around with thick folds of moral confusion. The person who at one moment appears to them as a wicked persecutor is the next moment seen as righteous executor and vindicator of the law. The person who at one moment appears as suffering from an iniquitous outrage of the law is the next moment seen as suffering the just penalty of sin. And thus the sight which to those who read its meaning aright is full of the deepest impressiveness, becomes to these waverers between two opinions a mere bewildering, hopelessly unintelligible spectacle, the moral impressions produced by which continually tend to cancel and obliterate each other.

It becomes necessary, therefore, to state, with the utmost distinctness and emphasis, that so long as even a lingering vestige of the expiatory theory remains in the mind—so long as any attempt is made to represent the sufferings of Christ as being, in any sense whatever, a satisfaction of retributive justice—so long the real explanation of the sufferings of Christ must remain concealed, and the truth of the Cross remain destitute of its full impressiveness and soul-subduing power.

How far entirely contradictory views of the Cross

may co-exist in the same mind may be illustrated by the following quotation from Dr. Stalker's *Trial and Death of Jesus Christ*. In dealing with the prophecy of Zechariah quoted in John's account of the crucifixion, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced," Dr. Stalker says: "In the death of Jesus, the figure became a fact—against the sacred person of the Son of God the spear was lifted up, and it was driven home without compunction. Evidently St. John thinks of this rather as the act of the Jewish people than of the Roman soldier. But the prophecy speaks not only of the people piercing God, but of their looking at their own work with shame and tears. At Pentecost this began to be fulfilled: and in every age since there have been members of the Jewish race who have acknowledged their guilt in the transaction. The full acknowledgment, however, still lingers, but the conversion of God's ancient people must begin with this. Indeed, every human being to whom his own true relation to Christ is revealed must make the same acknowledgment. It was the heart, not of a few soldiers or of the representatives of a single people, but of the human race, that hardened itself against Him. It was the sin of the world that nailed Him to the tree and shed His blood. Every sinner may, therefore, feel that he had a hand in it; and it is only when *we* see our own sin as aiming at the very existence of God in the death of His Son, that we comprehend it in all its enormity."¹

Here is a view of the meaning and effect of the sufferings of Christ on the Cross which is entirely harmonious with Scripture. But Dr. Stalker himself seems to be quite unconscious of how utterly

¹ *Trial and Death of Jesus Christ*, p. 291.

opposed it is to the expiatory theory. Nowhere does he attempt to reconcile the one with the other. And yet manifestly they stand in most urgent need of reconciliation. Nay rather, they are manifestly irreconcilable. For how can the piercing of the Son of God produce *penitent tears of shame* in those who pierced Him and at the same time impress their consciences with the sense that *God's retributive justice has been satisfied*? How can the one event awaken a world-wide sense of horror and shame, and also a world-wide sense of justice being done—a world-wide feeling of righteous satisfaction? In the nature of things, this is a sheer impossibility. In proportion as the sense of satisfaction increases in like proportion must the tears of penitence cease to flow. We must, therefore, definitely make up our minds. We must interpret the human experience of Christ either in harmony with the experience of the unjustly condemned martyr or else in harmony with that of the righteously condemned criminal. We cannot take both methods at the same time. If we attempt to do so we simply reduce our interpretation to utter confusion. We have already seen that loyalty to the Scriptures compels us to affirm that the consciousness of Christ, with its clearly marked manifestations of holy resentment, is akin to the consciousness of the martyr and not to that of the justly condemned criminal. We must further recognise that this loyalty to the Scriptures also constrains us when we proceed to show, as we must, that the death of Jesus was *more than* a martyr's death, to refrain from introducing into our interpretation any element which would contradict what we have already affirmed. Loyalty to the

Scriptures compels us to hold both that Christ was crucified *by* sinful men, and that Christ was crucified *for* sinful men. But loyalty to the Scriptures as the vehicle through which intelligible and reasonable truth is conveyed to us, must also prevent us from so interpreting the latter statement as to involve a flat and direct contradiction of the former.

CHAPTER X.

THE CROSS AND THE HATRED OF SIN.

THE expiatory theory of the Cross, starting with the assumption that Christ came to be punished, believing that unless that punishment had been inflicted the salvation of men would have been impossible, has studiously averted its eyes from the contemplation of what might have been had men dealt with Christ otherwise than they actually did, or had Christ dealt with men otherwise than He actually did. By so doing the expiatory theory has greatly tended to dwarf in the sight of men the wondrous magnitude of the human personality of Jesus Christ—to hide from them the real character of His sufferings, and to keep shrouded in darkness and confusion the plainly intelligible link of connection between these sufferings of the Saviour and the forgiveness of sins. For great and marvellous as were the works that Jesus wrought on earth, they were as nothing to the works that He might and could have achieved had it not been for His own voluntary self-suppression of His power. And great and terrible as were the sufferings which He endured, yet never did He suffer aught that a perfectly pure and holy Being might not suffer. And the reason why the Christ of God must endure these sufferings if sinful men were to be forgiven is by no means the inscrutable, intractable mystery which the expiatory theory virtually proclaims it to

be, but a reason such as the simplest mind can, in a measure at least, understand.

Only, first of all, the real nature of the sufferings must be rightly conceived. So long as these sufferings of Jesus are regarded as punishment, so long the reason of them must remain an inexplicable mystery. But as we have already seen, Jesus Himself did not regard His sufferings as punishment. He never accepted them in the spirit of the penitent and acquiescent criminal. On the contrary, they awoke in Him a most real and yet most holy resentment. Jesus recognised not one single drop of justice in the cup of His suffering. To Him it was wholly and entirely a cup of bitterest injustice. Yet it was the Father's will that the Son of God, now become the Son of Man incarnate, should drink this cup of injustice to its utmost dregs. It was by the Father's appointment that the Son drank the cup which, in its bitter essence, was so unutterably hateful both to the Father and the Son. Why? Why did the Father issue and the Son obey a command, obedience to which meant the occurrence of events which in themselves were utterly alien and opposed to the nature of the Godhead? Because, when the last drop of bitterness had been drunk, then there was One in the universe such as had never been in the universe before—*there was henceforward One who, having, in obedience to the Father's will, endured, as the Sinless Man, the worst that Sin could do to Him, had, by that experience, acquired a perfect human hatred of sin and a perfect human love of righteousness, which, because they were gained by a true and proper man under the conditions of human experience, were*

capable of being communicated to other human beings who were perishing for lack of such perfect human hatred of sin and perfect human love of righteousness.

There had been Others in the Universe who possessed a perfect hatred of sin and a perfect love of righteousness. God possessed it. Angels possessed it. But God-hatred of sin is not human-hatred of sin. As God-hatred, it may indeed impress itself upon man's nature from without. But it is not directly and sympathetically communicable to fallen man from within. Angel-hatred of sin is not human-hatred of sin. As angel-hatred, it is not directly and sympathetically communicable to fallen man. In order that God might bestow upon sinful man that perfect human-hatred of sin without which God cannot, in consistency with His holiness, extend mercy to man, it was necessary that the Eternal Son of God, becoming man in Jesus Christ, should suffer sin to do its worst upon His sinless human nature, so that He, as the appointed Saviour of men, should acquire, through a human experience undergone in the midst of and at the hands of sinful men, a perfect, human, and humanly communicable hatred thereof, which He in turn should impart, at first in imperfect degree, but at last perfectly, to the sinful men who should believe on Him.

Christ, as Dr. Dale has well said, came not to preach the gospel, but that there might be a gospel to preach. But the Eternal Son of God became man, not that He might satisfy the demands of retributive justice on behalf of sinful man, for no such satisfaction was either required or possible,

but that He might become qualified to enable sinful man to fulfil the inexorable demands of God's most holy mercy, which required that they to whom such mercy was shown should turn to God with a perfect hatred of sin, a perfect love of righteousness, and a perfect faith in the holiness of God's love in granting forgiveness. Man was utterly unable, of himself, to fulfil these conditions; but the Son of God, emptying Himself of all that prevented Him from becoming true and proper man, entered as the Sinless Man into the world of dying humanity, and instead of overawing the world by the display of spiritual force, as He justly and easily, in the exercise of His powers as the Sinless Man, could have done, suffered the sin of the world to do its worst upon His holy nature. He underwent this awful and immeasurable experience in humanity, possessing a humanly acquired knowledge of the truth that God is able to show mercy when the conditions attaching to perfectly holy mercy are complied with, and, through this experience, He acquired the power of enabling sinful man to comply with these conditions. He acquired what He had not possessed before, a perfect human hatred of sin and a perfect human love of righteousness *spiritually communicable to fallen and sin-blinded man*. He thus became qualified to bestow upon sinful man gifts which none other can bestow—the gifts essential to acceptance with God—a saving repentance and a saving faith. There is no repentance, and there is no faith acceptable to God save that which is born of the Cross, for it is only the hatred of sin and love of righteousness and

faith that are born of the Cross, and which look to the crucified Christ as their Author and Finisher, which possess within themselves any guarantee of attaining to perfection.

Now, in unfolding this conception of the saving work of Christ, it is needful first of all to emphasise the fact that the whole experience of the Son of God on earth—His acquisition of spiritual knowledge—His action and His suffering—was *human* experience. Into the mystery by which it was possible for the Eternal Son of God to become truly man, we are not here constrained to look. The time may come when all Christians shall clearly see that no other being, outside of fallen humanity, except only the Eternal Son of God Himself, could have become truly man. What, however, we are here under obligation to maintain is that once the Eternal Son of God had, by a transcendent act of self-sacrifice, become true and proper incarnate man, then he did not waste the advantage gained through that sacrifice by taking back to Himself, while still on earth, those powers peculiar to Godhead which He had laid aside. Jesus Christ was the Eternal Son of God, but He did not on earth act as the Eternal Son of God purely and simply. On earth He was the Eternal Son of God now become true and proper incarnate man, and His experience throughout was true and proper human experience. The powers He exercised were great and marvellous, but they were the powers rightly and properly belonging to sinless incarnate humanity. If they seem to us to be *more* than human, and we accordingly speak of them as *superhuman* and *miraculous*, that only shows how far we are from

understanding the greatness and glory of sinless humanity; it only shows how hard and difficult it is for members of a fallen race, thousands of years after the fall, to form any true conception of what they might have been and what powers they might have exercised had there been no fall. The powers that Jesus displayed were marvellous in the sight of sinful men. But to Jesus Himself, the Sinless Incarnate Man, they were simply the powers natural and proper to sinless incarnate humanity. He never considered Himself as holding a monopoly of such power. A partial measure of it He delegated to His disciples according as they were able to bear it. He did not forbid Peter to come to Him on the waters, and it was simply the failure of Peter's faith that prevented him from standing by his Master's side upon the heaving waves. "Greater works than these shall ye do,"¹ He told His disciples. What we call the "miraculous powers" of Jesus were simply the powers natural to sinless humanity—powers that all men would have, in a measure at least, enjoyed had there been no sin. The manifestation of these powers was a revelation of the human glory which had been forfeited by the fall, and to which, through the work of the Saviour, it was possible that humanity should return.

But it was only a partial measure of the glory and power of Sinless humanity that even the Sinless Man was able to reveal on earth. Far more was necessarily concealed than was revealed. Had the Sinless Man expressed the potentialities of His sinless human nature to the full He would have overawed the world and deprived it of all power of free

¹ John xiv. 12.

action. The sinful world lay in reality at the mercy of the Sinless Man. He could, in most sober fact, have taken possession of all its kingdoms. He would have had no need to levy armies and lead them against the legions of Rome. Even as He strode through the temple-courts and the money-changers fled before Him, so could He have appeared in the palaces of the kings of the earth, and by His mere will compelled them to leave their thrones. Even as He passed through the crowd of Nazarenes thirsting for His life, and no man was able to stay Him, so could He have guarded His life from every attempt made upon it. The whole world lay at His mercy. He could, if He had so chosen, have imposed His will upon all the nations.

It was a question, therefore, which the Lord had to determine at the very outset of His mission, whether He was to impose His own will on sinful men or (for practically there was no other alternative, since it was impossible that sinful men should be brought all at once to render Him a willing obedience) suffer sinful men to impose their will upon Him. In the temptation in the wilderness that question was decided. The choice lay between full self-expression and a large measure of self-suppression, and it was the latter that was chosen. But the impulse to choose otherwise must have been very strong. To found an empire, greater than that of Caesar but akin to it, could never have been at all a temptation to the Sinless Man. But to impose His own holy will at once upon the world—to compel the cessation of all visible oppressions—to cast down the powers of wickedness from all high places, and to exalt the meek and the lowly and the

devout—to let His whole spacious personality express itself to the full in works of splendid benefaction and of awe-inspiring judgment—all this was possible to the Sinless Man, and, if He had claimed His legitimate rights of self-expression, all this might have come to pass.

And yet, in a sense, Jesus had no choice. He must do the absolute best that could be done. His work must be perfect work. He must go to the root of evils. He must completely conquer sin. He must make the highest possible use of His powers. For Him to have embarked on a course of bringing in the Kingdom of God by force, even by what we may call spiritual force, would have been to make impossible of realisation God's ideal of gaining a spiritual sovereignty of voluntary love and real holiness over the souls of men. A temporary empire of overawed and servile humanity could not for a moment be compared with an eternal empire of redeemed and reconciled and free humanity. Therefore the Sinless Man did not hesitate. Knowing that He possessed within Himself the power that could have brought all the world to His feet, knowing also that His force-imposed rule would have been infinitely better for the world than the force-imposed rule of any other, He yet chose to respect the free-will of men, to seek no sovereignty over men that was not willingly accorded to Him by men themselves. He chose to let the manifestation of His powers be largely governed by the capacity of men to bear that manifestation. Instead of disclosing the full blaze of His glory, He allowed only some beams of its radiance to be seen of men.

Even these were wondrous enough. Even these were almost more than they could bear. "What manner of man is this?" they cried. Had He disclosed His glory to the full—even the glory of the Sinless Man—they would have fled from Him as they would have fled from God. In order that He might draw near to sinful men—that He might gain a hearing from them—that they might be able to keep possession of themselves in His presence—that He and they might meet in close and profitable intercourse, it was needful that self-suppression rather than self-expression should govern the conduct of the Christ. His great effort was not to bring Himself to do enough, but to keep Himself from doing more than enough; not to learn sufficient truth to utter, but to keep from uttering more than men were able to bear. It was only by holding in severest restraint the vast power—which was yet human power—which could have made Him undisputed autocratic monarch of the world, that He was able to bind to Himself in bonds of passionate and willing devotion His lowly company of disciples. It was only by keeping back a large portion of the great glad tidings concerning the Heavenly Empire from which He had come, that He was able to persuade His little company of the truth and reality of that which He did reveal. All through His life on earth, therefore, the Sinless Man carried the burden of an immeasurable self-suppression. There was nothing except His own will to do the Father's will, and to do the best possible for man, by saving him while still respecting his freedom of will, to hinder Him who had not where to lay His head, from assuming the

sovereignty of the world and imposing His will upon all mankind.

Are we to suppose then that it was in itself pleasing to the Sinless Man to be compelled to submit Himself to this immeasurable self-suppression? Are we to suppose that in itself it delighted Him to have to put Himself thus under restraint—to leave His greatest and most glorious truths unuttered, because men were unable to bear them; to allow His most wondrous deeds of beneficent power to remain undone because of men's lack of faith, and to pass by arrogant and cruel iniquity without dethroning it from its exalted seat? We have His own express testimony to the contrary. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not!"¹ These are words that testify to a vast effort of self-suppression, but they are not the language of delight. They speak of an infinite sorrow. Jesus suffered from the self-suppression to which He voluntarily subjected Himself. His suffering was unutterably real. Therefore He hated the sin which involved Him in this self-suppression, and therefore the further that self-suppression proceeded, and the more the inward spiritual tension increased, the more humanly perfect became His hatred of sin. He hated it as that evil and unlawful power which kept Him out of His legitimate, holy, spiritual sovereignty over the world—which prevented Him from finding in the world of humanity that sphere of joyous activity—that room for the full outgoing of His beneficent

¹ Matt. xxiii. 37.

powers without which it was impossible for His life in the world to be other than a life of suffering. He hated sin at first with the hatred of perception. He *saw* its full evil and guiltiness. He *saw* how it hindered and obstructed and defied the holy and beautiful will of the Father. He understood the fearful lengths to which it was prepared to go. He hated sin at last with the hatred of complete *realisation*. He *felt* it doing its horrible worst. By actual human experience of that worst, His human hatred of sin was made complete in intensity and perfect in communicableness. He, as Sinless Man, saw sin as God sees it, and felt sin as God feels it. He did not utter all truth, for such utterance was not necessary to salvation. He had many things that He might have said which He left unsaid. He did not work all the works that He had power to perform, for such working was not necessary to salvation. Many works He left undone because of men's unbelief. But He suffered the *uttermost* possible, for such suffering *was* necessary to salvation. He left no drop of the cup of suffering undrained, for if He had done so, He would not have gained a perfect human hatred of sin, communicable to sinful men. Wherefore in His great and measureless love for sinful men, and in obedience to the known will of the Father, He gave Himself up to death. Since it was in the nature of sin to be willing to put the Sinless Man to an unjust and violent death, since the Sinless Man was capable of suffering such a death, and since His human hatred of sin, gained through personal experience of its evil, must be perfect and not stop short anywhere of the deepest possible, if men were to be

saved, therefore, He surrendered Himself even to the death of the Cross.

There was absolutely no other reason than this why the Sinless Man should die. He did not need to die simply because He was a man. *Sinful* man is under subjection to death, but Sinless Man is not. If sin had not entered into the world of humanity no human being would have tasted death. All would have passed by a deathless transition into the glorified state. On the Mount of Transfiguration we see what might have been in the experience of the Sinless Man. It was then within His power to have entered into possession of that glorified body, which in actual fact He did not permanently assume until the Resurrection. The three disciples on the Mount were strictly enjoined not to speak of the great experience they had witnessed, *till after the Resurrection*. Once they had seen the Lord in His glorified body after the Resurrection, then, and not till then, were they in a position to understand the Transfiguration. Then they could realise the great and wondrous truth, that it had been in the power of Jesus to assume that glorified body and to enter directly into the life of the Heavenly Empire, even without passing through the experience of death. In the experience of the Transfiguration, therefore, we see a forthshadowing of what, according to God's appointed ideal order of things, was the mode of exodus from the natural into the spiritual realm decreed for sinless humanity.

Therefore death, *for the Sinless Man*, was something that it could never be for sinful men. It was, *for Him*, a thing utterly unnatural—a thing impossible, except through the outrage wrought by

sin. There could have been no death for Jesus *unless it had been inflicted upon Him by sinful men*. And therefore death to Jesus was an experience of unspeakable agony. It was not as though He would have tasted death in any case. He would not have tasted death at any time or in any form unless sinful men had been found sinful enough to be willing to put Him to death, and unless He had of His own free choice suffered them to work their wicked will upon the temple of His body.

Here we have the only explanation which really explains the agony in the garden and the cry of desolation on the Cross. No doubt it was a stern experience for Jesus to know that by giving Himself up to that death which was to be the means of saving those who, because of it, were led to a true repentance and faith, He was also sealing the condemnation of those who should refuse to turn from their evil ways. Doubtless it was a most stern experience for Him to be made to realise, as He must have realised, that the great event which meant eternal life for countless multitudes, meant death to others whom He also loved. But on the other hand, when we remember that Jesus could have foreseen no judgment and condemnation of impenitent sinners which His own heart and conscience did not sanction, then we realise that this explanation by no means sounds the depths of the Agony in the Garden.

And in any case, this explanation does not account, in any degree, for the cry of desolation on the Cross. That is a cry which will haunt the ears of humanity for ever. And it is a cry of purely personal suffering. It has no reference to others.

It is the Sufferer's own unspeakable pain that is declared in it. And if, as we have already done, we refuse to explain that cry as the result of the out-pouring of the Father's wrath, then there is nothing else that can account for it save this, that in the infliction of death upon the Sinless Man a great law of God was violently broken which is not broken in the deaths of sinful men—the law which enacts that for Sinless Humanity there shall be no death—and through the breaking of that law this appalling result happened, that He, whose communion with the Father had been hitherto perfect and complete, He to whom such communion was the very life of life, experienced for one transcendently awful and, as it were, eternal moment the immeasurable pain of finding the link of connection severed, the channel of communication with the source of His life abruptly broken, so that the unsullied mirror of His consciousness no longer reflected back the familiar glory of heaven, but the utter, fathomless, spirit-overwhelming darkness of a universe without a God.

It was but for a moment, as moments are counted on earth, that that dread experience lasted, but in that moment sin did the utmost worst that sin will ever be permitted to do, in this world at least. In some sense it separated the inseparable. It slew the immortal. It overwhelmed the invincible. It went the farthest that it will ever be permitted to go in the direction of wrecking the universe and destroying God. Yet it was He who was slain and overwhelmed who gained the victory. For in enduring the utmost worst that sin could do to Him, He brought to utmost perfection, both of in-

tensity and communicableness, His own human hatred of sin.

He had seen its hatefulness from afar while He was yet a lad in His earthly father's house. When He came to His consciousness as the Son of Man and looked around for the sphere in which to exercise His vast beneficent powers, He found that sin had almost wholly usurped His dominion, and but a small and barren portion of His great estate was available for Him. And He hated sin accordingly. When He began His public ministry He found Himself compelled, if He would be merciful to men, to follow a course of action involving the continuous suppression of His highest powers, the keeping back of glorious truths which He longed to utter, the refraining from the execution of wondrous and beneficent deeds which He burned to achieve for the good of men, and the holding in check of His holy desire to bring to His judgment bar the abounding and glaring iniquities of the world. He followed the course of action imposed upon Him, but He hated the sin which made it needful. Then that very self-suppression which brought Him near to men gave courage to His enemies to oppose Him and treat Him as one who was little to be feared. He could have crushed that opposition with a word, yet that word He must not speak. He did not speak it, but He hated the sin that imposed such a silence upon Him. So with an ever-increasing inward tension did the perfecting of the Saviour of men proceed from less to more; so by personal and immeasurably bitter experience of the dire effects of sin did He grow in human hatred of sin; until, at the very moment that

sin wrought its worst upon Him in inflicting the death of the Cross, and in entailing upon His spirit the awful experience of desolation—in that very moment His human hatred of sin attained its complete perfection. Then was His great work of becoming qualified to be the Saviour of the world finished, in one of its aspects, for ever. Henceforward and for evermore sinful men possessed a Saviour—One who, being truly man, in real communion with fallen men, yet sees sin as God sees it, that is as the evil power which, if unchecked, would wreck the universe and destroy God; and hates sin as God hates it, that is with a perfect and utter hatred, and is able to impart His perfect human hatred of sin to all sin-blinded men who believe in Him.

Such then was the result of the entrance into our prison-world of the Sinless Man. He did not fall a helpless victim to the blind rage of the prisoners therein. He was infinitely far away from being really a martyr. He was never for a single moment at the mercy of sinful men. On the contrary, they were at His mercy all the while. Neither did He make believe that the prison-world was not a prison-world, and strive to act in it as though it were a loyal province of the Heavenly Universe. He framed His action from the first in view of the fact that it *was* a prison-world into which He had entered. From the first He suppressed His rightful claims and proper powers. He did not express His beneficence to the full, as though men were not sinners and were able to receive blessings immeasurable without being demoralised thereby. In His first miracle of turning water into wine He

gave a faint, symbolical indication of how He *might* have enriched and glorified human life if there had been no sin amongst men. But there *was* sin amongst men, and He could not pursue the policy of unlimited, unrestrained beneficence to men. Neither did He express His justice to the full, as though with His coming the day of final judgment had arrived. In one of His first public actions in Jerusalem, and again at the close of His career, He showed, by His cleansing of the Temple, what He *might* have done in the way of forcibly purifying the world through the imposition of His own will upon sinful men. In the cleansing of the Temple, as in the turning of water into wine, He indicated a line of action open to Him which yet He did not pursue. He could, if He had so chosen, have transformed the slaves of Satan into the outward slaves of God. But since, at heart, they would have remained the slaves of Satan still, He did not choose. He could, if He had so chosen, have brought all men before His judgment seat, and apportioned to them forthwith the wages of their sin. But since it was possible for God to show mercy, though at a great cost, therefore the Sinless Man chose to become the channel through which God's mercy, keeping always true to its holiness, might flow forth to sinful men. Therefore, of His own free will, having full power at every stage in His career to completely alter the whole situation, the Sinless Man gave Himself up to suffer the worst that sin could do to Him through the agency of wicked men. And this He did, knowing that the holy mercy of God could never be available for man unless man should turn to God with a perfect

hatred of sin, a perfect love of righteousness, and a perfect faith; knowing that man, of himself, could never comply with these conditions; and knowing that the only method by which these indispensable spiritual gifts could be made communicable to sinful men, was through the Sinless Man voluntarily renouncing the career of power and honour and glory which was His by right, voluntarily relinquishing His right to a deathless entrance into the Heavenly Universe, and, by suffering sin to do its worst upon Him, gaining a perfect human, holy hatred of sin communicable ultimately in perfection to those amongst sinful men who should become united to Him in faith.

Or, taking up again an illustration previously used, we may say that sinful man was moving on the downward, mist-enshrouded path—the path which ends in the precipice of Destruction. He was ignorant, and ignorant of his own ignorance. He thought that he knew. He was blind, and blind to his own blindness. He thought that he saw. He was impotent, and unconscious of his own impotence. He thought that he could, of himself, walk on the path of salvation. And all the while he was moving downwards on the way of death. Then was sinful man confronted on his fatal path by his brother—the Sinless Man. And the Sinless Man wore a veil upon His face that He might speak with His sinful brother and His brother might hear. And He put a mighty restraint upon His power, lest His brother should flee from Him in terror. And He spoke to His brother in plain and simple parables that His brother might understand. And He wrought before His brother's eyes

gracious and wondrous, yet mercifully restrained, deeds of kindness and of power. But He spoke and He wrought (as it seemed) in vain. The thick, confusing mists of sin eddied around, the film of sin lay heavy on the blinded eyes, the crust of sin upon the hard, cold, empty, miserable heart refused to break. The sinful brother refused to turn his steps from the Way of Death. At last, in his blind fear and guilt-born hatred of the mysterious Being who refused to leave him to himself, the sinful brother raised his guilty hand, and in an awful defiance of every holy instinct and law, which set the crown upon all his past iniquities, struck his Sinless Brother dead. Then would the murderer fain have passed across the prostrate body and so moved onward to his doom; when behold, He that had been slain arose, for He was One who could not be held by death, and, standing once more before the astonished fratricide, once more held out to him the arms of forgiving love. And there came a wind of God that blew the mists of sin aside, and there fell, as it were, scales from the blinded eyes, and sinful man knew for a verity that he was indeed a sinner and that his sin was worthy of death—even death at the hands of an All-loving and All-holy God. And in great fear and trembling he fell upon his knees and sought for mercy from Him whom his sin had slain. And this was the answer he received, "Be Mine, and you shall be saved." And the reasonableness of that answer lay in this, that He who said "Be Mine" was One who now could guarantee to the God of all holiness that the man who was truly His should at once, in some degree, and at last

perfectly, become partaker of that perfect, holy, human hatred of sin and that perfect, holy, human love of righteousness which He, as the Sinless Man, by suffering sin to do its utmost worst upon Him, and thereby fulfilling to the uttermost the will of the Father, had made His own for ever.

Thus did God make the wrath of man to praise Him. Thus did the blow, which was aimed in blind hatred and impious defiance of God, result, under the gracious Providence of God, in placing the crown of perfection and efficiency upon that human experience of suffering love by which the Sinless Brother of sinful man, who in heaven is the Eternal Son of God, became man's Only and All-sufficient Saviour.

But the power to communicate to fallen men a perfect hatred of sin is but one of the qualifications which must be possessed by the Saviour of the world. We must now proceed to show how, in and through His human experience, the Sinless Man also acquired the power of communicating to fallen men a perfect love of righteousness and a perfect faith.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CROSS AND THE LOVE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

THE expiatory theory of the Cross, by its interpretation of the sufferings of Christ as punishment, has tended to hide from the sight of men, not merely that holy yet patient resentment with which the Saviour met the manifested sinfulness of men, but also the exalted spiritual joy which He found in accomplishing His saving work. For a being such as Jesus Christ to find joy in a career which involved enduring His Father's wrath would have been a sheer impossibility. From the moment that this element in His destiny dawned upon the consciousness of Jesus, from that moment His joy would have been slain. No victorious energy of will could ever have enabled Him to embrace such a destiny with glad and acquiescent acceptance.

And as a matter of fact, the Christ of the expiatory theory is too often a Christ whose life on earth is conceived of as almost wholly devoid of joy. Too often He is almost purely and simply the Man of Sorrows. Too often He is rather the object of an utterly misplaced compassion than of reverent and adoring worship. No doubt many of the exponents of the expiatory theory strive to avoid such a conclusion to their reasonings, and some in a measure succeed. But they do so at the expense of loyalty to their own theory. The Scripture account is that

Jesus "for the joy set before Him, endured the Cross, *despising* the shame."¹ The expiatory theory account *has* to be that He endured the Cross, *accepting* the shame, as something right and just and in accordance with the ideal will of God.

But when our eyes are opened to the truth that Jesus did really despise the shame, that He never accepted the false and presumptuous condemnations of sinful men as expressing the condemnation of His pure and holy Father, that He met the manifested sinfulness of fallen men with a pure and holy, though restrained and patient resentment, that He was never for a moment at the mercy of sinful men, but that they were at His mercy all the while, then we are able also to understand that Jesus could embrace His vocation as Saviour of the world with a deep and abiding joy, even although He knew full well that that vocation involved His suffering sin to work the uttermost worst that it could upon the temple of His body. In all His sufferings there were none unworthy of the Son of God. There was no single drop in His cup which it was unworthy of the Father to offer, or of the Son to drink. In all His sufferings there were none that were meaningless or useless. Therefore there was no element in the vocation of the Saviour which He could not accept with profound and satisfying joy.

It is entirely true that Jesus was the Man of Sorrows and that there never was any sorrow like unto His sorrow. It is equally true that Jesus was the Man of Joy and that there was never any joy like unto His joy. Joy and sorrow co-exist in every human heart. But in the case of the natural man

¹ Heb. xii, 2

of this fallen world, the joy floats precariously on a sea of sorrow, and continually tends to be swallowed up therein. In the case of the Sinless Man it is the sorrow that floats transiently on a sea of joy and continually tends to be swallowed up therein. To construe the experiences of Jesus as though His were a consciousness exactly similar to that of the natural man of this fallen world, is to go hopelessly astray from the truth. If the outward lot of Jesus were to become, in its main features, the lot of a natural man of this fallen world, then doubtless that man's joy would be utterly destroyed. But the truth is that nothing that happened to Jesus was able to rob Him of His joy. On the contrary, that joy increased with His increasing human experience of the wisdom and goodness and holiness of the Father's will, and of the spiritual glories and grandeurs of His human life, until, when He had obeyed the Father's will to the uttermost and found His obedience justified by His experience of the Father's glorious response to it in the Resurrection, then His joy became a perfect human love of righteousness, a perfect human delight in the will of God, which was His for evermore, and which, through the Holy Spirit, He was able to communicate to sinful men.

That the public career of Jesus began in a radiant atmosphere of joy is very manifest from the account of it in the gospels. When the Sinless Man had fulfilled His appointed years of silent preparation, when He received baptism from the hands of John, then, we are told, "lo, the heavens were opened unto Him and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon Him; and lo, a voice out

of the heavens saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"¹ Into the inner depths of such an experience it is not given to us to enter, but this we surely know: It was an experience of transcendent joy.

Then followed what we may call the Vision in the Wilderness, when for forty days and nights the soul of the Sinless Man was so rapt away in ineffable spiritual contemplation of the solemn glories of the truth of God that it was impossible, and probably unnecessary, for Him to give any heed to the wants of the body. It was surely the inrush of joy almost overwhelming which rendered food and sleep for so long a time superfluous. Not till after these forty days and nights of solemn rapture were past did the Tempter find an opportunity for the suggestion of his subtle solicitations.

In all this transcendent experience, it is to be remembered, there was nothing inhuman, or, strictly speaking, superhuman. The Sinless Man was simply entering, though in unique and exceptional degree, into the privileges of divine communion which properly belong to Sinless Humanity. In some such way would all men, had there been no sin, have been baptised with the Holy Spirit and entered into direct fellowship with God.

Then this Spirit-baptised, Sinless Son of Man, to whom alone amongst men the glory of the Heavenly Empire and of the Heavenly Father had been revealed, to whom it had been given to understand the full and lamentable difference between the world as it is and the world as, according to the ideal will of God, it ought to be, and who knew Himself commissioned of God to open the one pos-

¹ Matt. iii. 16, 17.

sible way out from the fallen world into the Heavenly Empire, began to utter His message and to put forth His mighty powers. And He did so at first with a joy which is plainly manifest. He compared Himself to a bridegroom and His disciples to the bridegroom's attendants.¹ Men wondered at the gracious words which fell from His lips.² Seeing His mighty works they glorified God who had given such power unto men, and it is no unwarrantable deduction that He who wrought the mighty works, Himself rejoiced in the multitude's joy. It is true that He could have wrought works far more great and wonderful. It is true that He possessed so vast a power as to be able to bring the whole world in abject submission to His feet. But it was the Father's will that He should hold that power in severe restraint. It was the Father's will that He should use that power according as men were able to bear it. And He, willingly and gladly making the sacrifice required of Him, embraced the Father's will and made it His very own. He entered into its spirit; He caught its innermost meaning; He saw and shared its motive; and, as a result, He tasted this sweet and noble joy—the joy of spreading joy amongst blind and sinful men.

Profound and abiding indeed must have been the inner spiritual satisfaction of Him who, when challenged as to the nature of His work by a prophet of God, was able to answer, "Go your way and tell John the things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever

¹ Mark ii. 19. ² Luke iv. 22.

shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me."¹ He who could utter such words manifestly found no occasion of stumbling in Himself. He found His own work entirely good, and rejoiced therein with a profound and simple, unaffected joy.

Gradually, however, as opposition and hatred to His person and work become intensified, we find that the joy of Jesus almost disappears from our sight. It is hidden in the cloud of bitter controversy in which He becomes involved. Yet it never disappears entirely. Enough is revealed to make it plain that the joy of Jesus, though now no longer appearing on the outer surface, was always there in the profound inner depths of His holy nature. We obtain a glimpse of Him rejoicing in spirit,² after the return of the seventy disciples, because the Father has justified His wisdom in assigning to the Son as fellow-labourers, not such men as possess a reputation in the world for wisdom, but even such simple, ignorant souls as the world counts children. Jesus sees in the light of experience that the Father's choice is wise—that the Father has really given to them the world's best—because in and through such simple souls the spiritual victories that He longs for are being really, in a measure, attained, while the "wise" and "understanding" remain quite unable to effect any change for the better on the moral condition of the world. And looking along the line of thought thus opened up before Him, He sees greater and greater victories to be won in the future by similar instruments; He beholds Satan fallen as lightning from heaven; and He rejoices in the Spirit accordingly.

Again, at the Last Supper on the very eve of

¹ Matt. xi. 5, 6. ² Luke x. 21.

Gethsemane and the Cross, we find Him bequeathing His "peace"¹ to his disciples. There, too, He speaks of "His joy" in such fashion as to imply that it is His constant and inalienable possession, and prays that it may ever abide in the hearts of His followers.²

We see then that the joy of Jesus remained with Him to the very end of His earthly career. Nay, we may say it was a joy which must have increased with His increasing experience of the actual working out of the will of God. It must have increased until it became a perfect human joy in righteousness. How was this possible? How, in face of what the practical will of God involved for Him in the form of experience of mistrust, of mockery, of malice and hatred, of apparent failure, and of an unspeakably cruel and torturing death, how, in face of all this, was it possible for Jesus to preserve and bring to its uttermost human perfection His joy in the will of God? Because Jesus knew from the first that the real essence of His saving work lay, not in the effects which He was able immediately to produce on that small portion of sinful humanity with which on earth He came in personal contact, but rather in the eternal effects produced in His own being and character by His experiences in the midst of sinful men. He came not to save a small group of Jews who happened at the time to be living in the world. He came not as One already possessing all the qualifications of the Saviour. He came *that He might become eternally qualified to be the Saviour not of Jews only, but of the whole world—of all the generations of men, past, present, and to come.*

¹ John xiv. 27. ² John xvii. 13.

Through His humanly acquired knowledge of God He knew what these qualifications of the Saviour of the world must be, and He knew that all His varied experience on earth, both joy and sorrow, was tending to bring to the uttermost perfection, within His own nature, these all-essential qualifications. Hence he was able to encounter the opposition of sinful men both with an increasing holy resentment of the increasing sinfulness of their treatment, and also with an increasing inner joy in His own onward advance, through His very experience of that opposition, towards a perfect human hatred of sin communicable to sinful men, and therefore towards a time of glorious spiritual conquest when they who hated Him should bow as penitent sinners at His feet. He knew that His real essential work was not being hindered in any way because the Jewish multitudes proved fickle—or the scribes and Pharisees plotted against Him, or one of His own disciples betrayed Him. He knew, on the contrary, that every pang of anguish thus inflicted upon Him only helped to make Him still more that holy, human-hearted Saviour of men who is able to impart to spiritually blind and impotent men His own perfect human hatred of sin.

And so we find the Lord, as the joy of spreading immediate joy amongst men is taken away from Him by reason of their unbelief and hostility, beginning to indicate the deeper source from which all along He has continued to draw His joy. He shows Himself fully conscious that it is *within His own nature* that the real enduring fruit of His labour and suffering is to be found. We find Him ex-

claiming, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."¹ Again, when the Pharisees would fain instil fear into His mind by telling Him that Herod is seeking to kill Him, His memorable reply is this, "Go and say to that fox, Behold I cast out devils and perform cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am perfected."² Even as He spoke, He knew that He was being perfected, and that knowledge was the source of His secret and abiding joy. He knew that every one of the poison-tipped arrows of sin which were daily aimed at His holy heart were doing a God-appointed work within His own human soul, through the holy human hatred of sin which they evoked therein. He knew that a day was soon to come when one of these arrows should finally pierce His heart and shed His wholly innocent and sacred blood. But He knew also that on that very day His own spiritual baptism would be accomplished—His own perfecting as the Eternal Saviour of the world would become complete, provided that He Himself could accept this vocation of immeasurable suffering with a holy and joyful obedience. In so far as His vocation called Him to endure the worst that sin could do, it tended to produce an infinitely real and immeasurable pain. But in so far as His vocation was assigned to Him by the Father whom He wholly loved and assuredly knew, and whose merciful and holy will He embraced with comprehending and sympathetic delight, it tended to produce an infinitely real and immeasurable joy. No wonder that He was "straitened" till that great and unique vocation was fulfilled. But He did fulfil it. The joy was

¹ Luke xii. 50.² Luke xiii. 32.

stronger than the pain. It embraced the pain and absorbed it into itself.

We find, indeed, that as the cup of suffering became filled towards the brim, its bitterness became almost more than even He could bear, and He prayed the Father that if it were possible, the cup might pass away from Him. It was not that He trembled at the prospect of enduring the Father's wrath. Such a prospect would have caused Him, not to *tremble*, but to *die*. He trembled rather and shrank with unspeakable aversion from the transient loss of that unique and glorious human consciousness of the Father's ever constant love, which the endurance of a wholly unnatural, unjust and violent, and otherwise impossible death involved. But He was strengthened to endure the otherwise unendurable, because He knew that the Father Himself would suffer with Him in His suffering. He knew that the Father would never impose upon Him the drinking of this cup of suffering against His own will. He knew that if He Himself finally refused to drink the cup, the Father would never compel Him to drink it, for, not to speak of other reasons, the Father's holy purpose of acquiring a spiritual sovereignty over the souls of sinful men would in no wise be furthered by such a compelled obedience. He knew that if He Himself could not willingly, with a solemnly joyous and comprehending acceptance, embrace the Father's will, even to this uttermost point of self-surrender, then the Father's holy and loving purpose could not be fulfilled. He who would save mankind must attain to a perfect human love of righteousness communicable to sinful men.

But He who had already in His own past human experience found the Father's will so perfectly good and wise; He who, through His past obedience to that will, had found in His human soul a joy that had embraced and swallowed up His every sorrow; He who, through obedience to that will, had already tasted somewhat of the Saviour's rapture and found sinful men, otherwise doomed to degradation and spiritual death, flinging themselves in tears of adoring gratitude at His feet; He who, by His experience of the blessed fruits already resulting from that measure of self-suppression which, in obedience to the Father's will, He had practised in the past, had been profoundly sustained and comforted, was able now, when the supreme crisis had come, to carry that self-suppression to the utmost possible limit, and surrender Himself to the hated and hateful death of the Cross with the most perfect and loyal and willing obedience.

And this obedience was based not merely on past experience of the goodness of the Father's will. It was not a blind obedience. It was based also on clear and immediate yet humanly acquired vision of the goodness of the Father's will in respect to this very matter—His surrender to the death of the Cross. He, as Sinless Man, understood the holy and loving reasons which caused the Father to make this tremendous ordeal the climax of the Saviour's vocation. He understood, and to the very uttermost, He sympathised. He understood the Father's will to save—to reign in joyous, loving, spiritual sovereignty over the human souls He had created. In His sight that was an infinitely good

and glorious will, and He made that will His own with a solemn and abiding enthusiasm. He understood also the obstacles that lay in the way. He knew that God's holy mercy could not flow forth to men unless in some way men were rendered capable of complying with the conditions of that holy mercy. He knew that sinful men could never of themselves comply with these conditions. He knew that only through the God-man could that which was otherwise impossible be achieved. He knew that, even for the God-man, this achievement was possible only on condition that He should suffer sin to work its uttermost worst upon Him, that so He might acquire, as an eternal possession of His nature, a perfect human hatred of sin communicable to sinful men; and that He should endure this suffering with a free and willing obedience, that so He might acquire, as an eternal possession of His nature, a perfect human love of righteousness communicable to sinful men.

And further, He knew not only the reasons why He was called upon to suffer, but He also knew precisely what He was required to endure. There was no confusion in His holy mind between the condemnations of sinful men and the condemnation of the Father. He knew that it was the worst that *sin* could do, and not the worst that *His Father* could do, that He was called upon to bear. And He knew that the worst that sin could do, unspeakably bitter though it was, was not by Him unendurable. He knew that He could not be held by death. He saw beyond the grave. He was able to behold Himself risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, and seated at the right hand of God in

power and glory, having achieved a transcendent spiritual victory which would be the wonder of men and angels throughout unending ages.

Therefore He endured the Cross, *despising* the shame. He endured the Cross, possessing in the deepest depths of His spirit the profoundest and holiest joy that any human spirit has ever known.

It cost Him an agony to attain that joy. It cost Him an agony to make the Father's will utterly and completely His own. The spirit indeed was willing, but the flesh was weak. Yet the spirit completely mastered the flesh, and rendered it wholly obedient. Ere He left the garden the great victory was practically won. He went to the Cross as a conqueror goes to his triumph, able to embrace the most intolerable of all pains that a holy and immortal being could endure, with the purest and most exalted of spiritual joys.

And, as the conflict had been a truly human conflict, so was the joy in which the great victory was won a truly human joy. Never to all eternity shall we be able to measure the full depths of infinite contentment expressed in that victor's cry, "It is finished." Never shall we fully fathom the perfect peace and boundless trust uttered in the call of the passing soul, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." But according to the measure of our capacity we can understand and share that strange and wondrous joy. The human joy in the will of God which willingly loses all for the sake of holy love, the joy which shines through falling tears, the joy which rejoices in that utter scorn of sin which keeps afar from the heart the barbed arrows of erstwhile strong temptation; the joy which walks

in peaceful calm amidst the stings of calumny and the blows of persecuting violence; the joy which finds in the grave the Beautiful Gate of Eternal Life, such joy, thanks be to God, is not wholly a stranger to our fallen world. And it is ours, in dim and imperfect measure now, because, first of all, He made it His own in perfect degree, who died for us upon the Cross. It is ours in dim and imperfect measure now, but there is a great day yet to come when that holy delight in the will of the Father shall fill the whole being of every believer to the uttermost measure of his soul's capacity. And it is because God, who sees the end of all things in their beginnings, sees that great day as though it were present now, that He is able, in entire consistency with His holiness, to grant forgiveness of sins to the sinful man who is united by faith to the Christ of the Cross.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CROSS AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF TRUTH.

THE task which now devolves upon us is to exhibit the experience of Jesus Christ so as to show Him becoming qualified to impart to sinful men a saving faith—a God-acceptable faith—a faith which contains within it the guarantee of becoming transmuted into perfect assured spiritual knowledge of the truth of God, and is therefore, *inter alia*, capable of accepting the forgiveness of God without dishonouring His absolute holiness.

How then did Jesus become qualified to impart to sinful men a saving faith? In some respects our answer must follow the lines pursued in the two preceding chapters. Jesus became qualified to bestow upon sinful men a saving faith by acquiring, in the course of His earthly career, as an eternal possession of His nature, a perfect, assured, human, spiritual knowledge of the truth of God—a knowledge spiritually communicable to sinful men; and thus securing that whatever human faith attaches itself to and grounds itself in Him, shall ultimately become a perfect, assured, spiritual knowledge of the truth of God.

The days are happily gone by when Christian people considered it necessary to deny the true humanity of their Lord by ascribing to the infant Jesus the omniscience of the Godhead. When the Eternal Son of God became man, then He became

man in very deed, entering our world through the gates of birth, in all the utter unconsciousness of human childhood. As His physical frame grew, so His mind grew, and so also did His spiritual capacities grow. "He waxed strong, becoming filled with wisdom."¹ "He advanced in favour with God and men."² There was a time when He possessed but little spiritual knowledge; there was a time when He possessed more; there was a time when His knowledge became the complete knowledge required for His great vocation. Yet there was no stage in His career when He merely believed. There was no time when His knowledge was not assured. So far as personal assurance of its truth was concerned, His knowledge was always perfect.

And yet again there was no time during His career on earth when His knowledge was other than human knowledge. If it seems to us at first sight to be otherwise, if His knowledge seems to be, not merely beyond what is possible to sinful human nature, but also to be superhuman altogether, and to attain to a height and scope and a character of assurance such as no human being could possibly reach, that only shows how hard and difficult it is for members of a fallen race, thousands of years after the fall, to attain to any proper understanding of what they might have been and what powers of spiritual discernment would have been the common property of the race had there been no fall. It is not that any other human being, sinless or otherwise, could ever have attained to the knowledge of the Incarnate Son of God. But had there been any sinless human beings in the world when Jesus came,

¹ Luke ii. 40. ² Luke ii. 52.

it would have been easy for them, in virtue of their own assured knowledge of God, to discern what we find it so hard to understand, that His knowledge throughout was humanly acquired knowledge.

It was in virtue of His possession of a sinless human soul—unique in its capacities, and yet a truly human soul—a soul which He continually preserved in its sinlessness, that Jesus attained to the wondrous knowledge which He proclaimed and expressed in our fallen world. The pure in heart see God, and this true and proper Man was wholly pure in heart. He was, therefore, in a position to have truth communicated to His soul by God in which sinful men are not. And His Heavenly Father fed Him continually, wisely, and lovingly, according as He was able to receive it, with the Bread of Life, which is His holy truth; and the loyal, holy-hearted Son faithfully put each day's spiritual bread to its proper use in loving and loyal obedience, thereby preparing Himself to receive the fuller and richer supply which the morrow was to bring. There were no lost opportunities in the life of the Sinless Man, and therefore not only there was in Him no unrest, no impatience, no feverish desire to receive to-day the bread intended for the morrow, but also there was in Him a rate of progress in the acquisition and assimilation of spiritual truth which is without any parallel in human history. Each new day saw a new extension of His horizon—a closer approach to full comprehension of all that He required to know to fit Him for His great vocation as the Saviour of men.

Yet in all this increase of spiritual knowledge there was nothing contrary to the laws that govern

human development. He was not a mere passive recipient of knowledge. He was not a mere vessel into which the Father poured the living water of truth. His was a free, moral personality. His acquirement of this knowledge was conditioned by His faithful and diligent use of His own powers. He had to read and study the books which the Father spread before Him—the Book of the world, the Book of the heavens, the Book of human nature—the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and above all, the Book of His own unique, holy human nature in which from day to day the Father inscribed His truth as it was nowhere else inscribed in all the world. In all these sacred Books He had to find His Heavenly Father's meanings. He had to harmonise them the one with the other so that they should be present to His soul in all the concord of truth. He had to find from them certain and assured answers to the questions whether or not the world as He saw it was the world as God His Father intended it to be, whether the Father willed that the world be destroyed or saved, whether He Himself had any special part to play in the accomplishment of the Father's purposes, and if so, what part.

That Jesus had already found the answers to these questions before He began His public ministry is evident from the manner in which, from the very beginning, He shaped His career. To suppose that only gradually, as His work went on, did He come to realise that He must give Himself up to death, is not merely to ignore such an early utterance as that given in John ii. 19, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," but also to be blind to the fact that from the very be-

ginning Jesus had to choose between a full self-expression which would have made Him undisputed Autocrat of the world, and a large measure of self-suppression which could not be consistently pursued without ending in death at the hands of wicked men. And further, such a supposition involves setting an utterly inadequate value upon the power of acquiring spiritual knowledge of the truth of God possessed by the Sinless Man. The only conclusion we can draw that will fit the facts of Scripture is that Jesus, before He began His public ministry at all, had already come into possession of a clear vision of the situation caused in the world by the entrance of sin, and of the course of conduct which it was His Father's will for Him, in view of that situation, to pursue. There is no reason to doubt that it was during the forty days and nights of spiritual vision in the wilderness that the Saviour's knowledge of His vocation reached the point of completeness and perfection, so far as He Himself was concerned. If, at that stage, He had returned to the Heavenly Empire from which He had come, He would have taken with Him a perfect, humanly acquired knowledge of the truth of God sufficient for the needs of One who might be the Saviour of men, but it would not, in that case, have been a knowledge communicable to sinful men. The knowledge acquired had first to be uttered in a human career determined by the knowledge before it could become in Him a spiritual knowledge communicable to the souls of sinful men.

Jesus did not need to express His knowledge in action for His own sake, that is in order to render Him any surer of the truth than He already was.

He was at all times perfectly assured of all the truth that He knew, and therefore He could not be rendered more assured. But in order that the truth might become in Him a knowledge spiritually communicable to the seared consciences of sin-blinded men, His knowledge required to be expressed, not merely in words, but also in action and suffering. The actions and sufferings of Jesus could speak to the souls of men, even although their minds could give no intelligible or articulate account of what these actions and sufferings said to their souls. His words and deeds and sufferings were able to be luminous mysteries to the souls of men, assuring them of the truth, and therefore generating faith, long before the minds of men were sufficiently trained to give articulate accounts of the truth, or even to intellectually comprehend such explanations as might be furnished to them.

And so the spiritual knowledge of Jesus, which was already sufficient for Himself to enable Him to determine His course, yet became in Him a knowledge spiritually communicable to sinful men, only in proportion as it acted itself out and uttered itself in the human career of action and suffering determined and guided by the knowledge. And therefore it was not until the last point of that utterance of knowledge in action and suffering had been reached; it was not until the final expression of His knowledge had been given in His surrender to the death of the Cross, that the knowledge of Jesus became in Him a knowledge capable of being directly, sympathetically, and intelligibly communicated to the souls of sin-blinded men with such invasive and convincing power as to drive out before

it, completely and for ever, the errors and falsehoods generated by the penal consequences of sin.

When, therefore, Jesus had done and suffered all that He knew must be done and suffered by the Saviour of sinful men, the great result of His work was not that, during the course of His career, He had wrought a measure of conviction of the truth of God in the souls of some few of the Jews with whom He had come in contact. It was this immeasurably greater result, that He Himself had gained the power of declaring the truth of God in a spiritual language intelligible to the sin-blinded souls of all mankind. He had acquired, as an eternal possession of His nature, a perfect, assured, human, spiritual knowledge of the truth of God, which was capable of being communicated, at first imperfectly but at last perfectly, as assured knowledge of the truth of God, to sinful men of all ages, who in their natural blindness of soul were utterly unable of themselves to attain to such a knowledge.

Or, we may put it that the truth of God was, first of all, the Bread of Life to the soul of Jesus Himself. He began to make it the Bread of Life for sinful men by expressing it in words which even sinful men could, in a measure, understand. He continued not merely to express the truth in truth-revealing words, but also to utter it in truth-revealing deeds and sufferings. He proceeded onwards from preaching the Sermon on the Mount, until He had also given His sacred body to be broken for men. And when He gave His body to be broken, He not merely uttered the truth more effectively than it was possible to do through the Sermon on the Mount, but also He gained—and this was

the crown of His great achievement—the power of uttering the truth of God eternally in a human spiritual language, the great words of which are His experiences on earth—a language which transcends all the forms of common human speech, and yet is capable of being translated into these forms—a spiritual human language intelligible to the souls of men of all generations and kindreds and tongues. And thus He acquired the power of so communicating the truth of God to the souls of men that all who receive it, though it be at first with faint and feeble faith, are yet put in the way of receiving and rejoicing in it at last with the same absolutely clear discernment and the same perfect assurance of its truthfulness which belongs to Him who utters it.

When Jesus Christ ascended from earth to be with the Father, as He had been with the Father in the beginning, He was the same Eternal Son of God that He had ever been, and yet He was not the same. He was now the fully qualified and perfectly equipped Saviour of men, made perfect through His experiences on earth. There was now One in the Heavenly Empire who not only understood the situation of the fallen world—in that there was nothing new—but also was able to cause the inhabitants of the fallen world themselves to understand their situation. He was able to communicate the truth of God to their sin-blinded souls in a humanly intelligible language—a spiritual language of which His experiences on earth were the great, ever-living, inexhaustible words. He had not merely opened up the way of salvation, for that in itself would have been insufficient. If the way

were open, and yet men remained blind to its existence and deaf to all voices that told them of it, then they could not be saved. But He had also become qualified to convince them that the way was open, and that, with the full consent and authority of God and of their own consciences, they might freely and joyfully avail themselves of it.

And the first historical proof of the real acquisition by Jesus Christ of this new power to communicate the truth of God to sin-blinded human souls was the Day of Pentecost. The men of Pentecost were the first human souls on earth who really heard in its fulness the new human language of heaven and thrilled to the depths of their beings as they caught its great transcendent meanings. Salvation, O so urgently needed! Salvation, O so wondrously provided! Salvation, O so infinitely filled with the promise of riches and glory such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man hath ever conceived. And salvation through Christ alone! Salvation only through Him who died and rose again, only through Him who alone opened up the Way, only through Him who alone could bring the Truth of the Open Way home to the consciences of men! Thus spoke the Holy Spirit of God proceeding from the Father and the Son, availing Himself of and interpreting to men the new heavenly-human language of the earthly experiences of the Christ. Thus has the Holy Spirit been ever speaking, and thus will He ever speak, and woe to that man who knowingly and wilfully alters or rejects His message.

It now remains to us to show more in detail how the heavenly-human language which speaks by the

Holy Spirit through the earthly experiences of Jesus, and in especial, through the Cross, contains within it the great two-sided message of the truth of which God demands that every sinful man shall become perfectly assured—God regards sin as worthy of death; and yet God is able and willing, in entire consistency with His holiness, freely and graciously to pardon this death-worthy sin in the case of the believer in Christ.

First of all, how does the death of Jesus testify to the truth that sin is worthy of death? If to this question we give the answer which the Scriptures give, we shall not say, as the expiatory theory says, that the death of Jesus was a death inflicted on Him by the Father, using wicked men as His instruments, and that it was the same kind of death that the sinner ought to die, namely death under the holy wrath of God, and that therefore—for this reason—it reveals the truth that sin is worthy of death. For the Scriptures most plainly declare that the death of Jesus was death inflicted by the hands of wicked men—who could by no possibility act as the direct executors of the holy will of God—that it was *not* the death that the sinner ought to die, but bore only the most superficial resemblance to the sinner's death, and was really the death of a *Saviour*, which is the *diametrical spiritual opposite* of the death of a sinner. And yet, with the utmost reality and solemnity, the death of Jesus does declare that human sin is in the sight of God worthy of death. How? Because the death of Jesus afforded a unique opportunity, deliberately provided by God, for the real nature of human sin to manifest itself, and because, when it took advan-

tage of that unique opportunity, human sin did, in actual, awful, historical fact, manifest itself as the evil power which, with callous cruelty and with dreadful impiety, was willing, if it could, to destroy divine humanity, and thereby showed that, if it were permitted to manifest itself to the full, it would go on to destroy God Himself and wreck His holy universe.

It is thus, plainly and directly, that the Cross of Christ declares continually to the sinful race of men the death-worthiness of their sin. Everywhere else what we see in our fallen world in the experience of sinful and unbelieving men is God bringing death on sinful beings. In the Cross of the Sinless Christ, and there alone, is the *reasonableness* of God's utter hostility to sin made manifest. There even the natural man, with his soul blinded by the punishments of sin to the exceeding sinfulness of sin, finds the scales falling from his eyes, and is brought to confess and acknowledge that, if this indeed be the ultimate outcome of his sin—the sin that seems so harmless and excusable in his eyes—if this indeed be his sin full-grown and completely manifested in all its hateful horror, then God is truly most righteous and just when He accounts all sin as worthy of death and brings the doom of death upon all who continue therein.

The wicked crucifixion of Jesus Christ was not merely, as we have already seen, the means under the Providence of God whereby the Saviour gained in perfection a spiritually communicable human hatred of sin, but it was also the means of expressing, in such a way as men could understand and be assured of it, the truth that sin is death-

worthy in the sight of God; as well as the reason behind the truth, namely that sin is that evil power which, if permitted to do so, would destroy God and wreck the universe. Of course, so long as the expiatory theory blocks the way, this great truth of the Cross cannot be seen, or seen only through great mist and confusion. So long as the crucifiers of Jesus are assumed to be the executors of the retributive justice of God, and therefore to be carrying out the ideal will of God, they cannot possibly at one and the same time be seen to be striking a murderous blow at the heart of God Himself—a blow in which the true nature of all sin, its bitter cruelty, its shocking and abominable impiety, and its far-reaching and terror-striking consequences are expressed as they are nowhere else expressed in all human history. But when we put aside the confusions of the expiatory theory, as reason, conscience, and Scripture enjoin us to put them aside, when we remove the dark veil of error with which that theory has for so long obscured the Cross—then the horror of sin, expressed through the Crime of the Cross, strikes in upon our hearts, even as it struck to the hearts of the men who first heard its message, and we, gazing in terror at the awful work of our sin-stained hands, and beholding the fearful end to which our sin is leading us, are constrained to cry, as they cried, "What shall we do to be saved?" All other weaker definitions of sin disappear, and the Cross steadily and persistently thrusts the truth home upon our consciences that sin is that unspeakably evil thing which, if it could, if God did not continually resist it, if God did not immediately begin

to bring death upon all who lend themselves to be its servants, would in the end bring destruction upon God Himself and wreck the universe which depends upon Him. It was thus that the Holy Spirit interpreted the Cross to the souls of the men of Pentecost. It is thus that all down through the centuries He has been seeking to interpret it. But so far has the theology of the expiatory theory been from coinciding with the Holy Spirit's teaching, that it has almost evaporated the horror of sin out of the Cross and encouraged men to imagine that the greatest, most dreadful, and impious defiance of God that the world has ever known, or will know, was something well-pleasing to God and a complete satisfaction to His retributive justice. It is simply inevitable that the horror of sin should die out in the hearts of men when they are taught to believe and persuade themselves that it is really true that the crowning sin of the world was, not an outrage upon God at all, but something through which God's justice was satisfied.

If ever a Pentecostal time is to come again to the Christian Church it must come, first of all, through the restoration to the Christian conscience of that shuddering horror of sin which is produced by the Cross alone, through the clear recognition that the very first message of the Cross, as it stands in awful historical fact looking a sinful world in the face, is this: All human sin is worthy of death—even death at the hands of the God of holy love, for all human sin aims in the end at the destruction of God and the wreck of the universe.

No man, however, is able, all in a moment, and

simply by reading accurately the nature of the message conveyed by the historical Cross, to attain to the perfect hatred of sin which is required in a perfect repentance. The sinner who is made to feel the horror of sin produced by the historical Cross must needs learn to look upward from the Cross on earth to the Heavenly Empire where that Eternal Saviour abides who, having, through His experience on the Cross, gained a perfect human hatred of sin communicable to sinful men, waits to impart to each penitent soul, through a process of spiritual discipline, that absolutely perfect hatred of sin which must be the common property of all the citizens of the heavenly-human Kingdom of God.

And therefore the horror and hatred of sin in the true believer's heart is a thing which can never diminish or fade away. It must go on increasing to perfection. The more he learns of Christ, the more he comes to realise the greatness, dignity, and spiritual glory of Him who was slain by human sin—and this realisation must go on and on for ever, for the real Christ is ever far beyond and above our highest thoughts of Him—then the more he must recoil in horror from the sin which dared to slay his Lord. The more he assimilates the spiritual knowledge of Christ, the more fully will he learn from the Christ who was crucified by sin, that sin is worthy of death, until at last he must attain to a perfect, assured knowledge of that great truth. And it is because God finds in the faith of the Christian believer this certainty of becoming, in the end, perfect, assured knowledge that sin is worthy of death, that He is able, in entire consistency with His holiness, to bestow a full and free forgiveness

on the sinner whose faith unites him to the Christ of the Cross.

We come now, in the second place, to inquire how the heavenly-human language which speaks by the Holy Spirit through the earthly experiences of Christ, and especially through the Cross, convinces sin-blinded man that God, who regards human sin as worthy of death, is yet able and willing, in entire consistency with His holiness, to pardon freely and graciously this death-worthy sin in the case of the believer in Christ. According to the expiatory theory, the sinner is to be convinced that God is willing to forgive and yet remains holy in forgiving the sins of the believer, because he sees that God through the Cross demands and obtains compensation for granting forgiveness, and finds that compensation in the death of Jesus regarded as a satisfaction to divine retributive justice. But men have found it an exceedingly difficult matter to see in the Cross what the expiatory theory invites them to see. The nearer they have come to the historical Cross, the more impossible has it been for them to find it uttering the things which the expiatory theory declares that it utters. And even when, by keeping far back from the historical Cross, they have laboriously persuaded themselves that the expiatory theory account was true, yet many earnest and humble-minded men, especially in recent years, have experienced a grievous sense of disappointment in regard to the pardon which the expiatory theory tried to place in their hands. That pardon has seemed to many men, who were willing and anxious to see in it the veritable forgiveness of God, a strange hybrid

betwixt mercy and justice. It has seemed to represent neither true mercy nor yet true justice. It has seemed very disappointingly far removed from the royal, gracious, free forgiveness of God. It has left them cold. It has left them uninspired. It has left them almost as much the victims and the bond-servants of sin as they were before. It has seemed to beat their spirits yet further down into the dust. It has not raised them out of the dust. It has seemed to proclaim to them that they are delivered from the pit and the miry clay, and that therefore there ought to be a new song of joy in their hearts and on their lips, while, as a matter of real fact, they have felt themselves to be as deeply sunk in the pit and as fast-bound in the mire as ever.

But when we put aside the confusions of the expiatory theory as they deserve to be put aside, when we recognise that Jesus was never punished, nor did God require any punishment whatever to be inflicted on any one in order to enable Him to forgive, when we discern that God's forgiveness is in itself always and necessarily holy, and has no occasion whatever to drag in safeguards for itself from the realm of retributive justice, then we are placed in a position to read the real message of the Cross as a message of royal, holy, gracious forgiveness, all aglow with the divine tenderness and compassion and brimming over with the promise of a new and joyful and holy life for the sinful man who accepts it.

For, although the Cross as we have construed it reveals that God regards sin, and is right and just in regarding sin as worthy of death, it also reveals

God as willing and able to make this revelation of the death-worthiness of sin to sinful man, at the cost of the life of His only-begotten Son. It was not sin itself which made this revelation of its own innate horror. It is not to sin that man is indebted for his knowledge of the sinfulness of sin. The revelation of the horror of sin was made through the Father appointing His Son to suffer sin to work its uttermost worst upon His holy human nature, and through the Son willingly and freely sacrificing His holy human nature on the altar of the Father's holy will. The revelation of the horror of sin in the sight of sinful men was not, therefore, a triumph for sin. It was a triumph for God, for which God had wrought and planned and suffered. And sinful man cannot look upon the Cross without seeing that it is so. "Why then," he must ask, "did God thus work and plan and suffer that I, who am worthy of death, should be made to *know* that I am worthy of death? Why did God not leave me to die in my blindness and guilt? Can it be that God has opened my eyes to the death-worthiness of sin, only that I may see and confess the justice of my doom before I suffer my doom?" And the only answer which as a reasonable being he can give to these questions is, "No, God did not reveal to me the death-worthiness of sin at so great a cost, in order that He might destroy me. He did this in order that I might be saved from sin. It was necessary, if I were to be saved from sin, that I should be made to realise that sin is worthy of death, and in causing me to realise this awful truth God has already been showing mercy to me. He has been merciful to me all through my blindness. He has

been merciful to me in removing my blindness. But why this mercy to me? Who am I that God should do these things for me? Who am I that God should give up His only-begotten Son to death in order that my eyes might be opened to the death-worthiness of my sin? Can it be that in spite of my sin, with which I am so identified, God makes a distinction between myself and my sin? Can it be that my sin and myself can be separated from each other? Can it be that this is the very thing that God is striving to do? What then is my real self apart from sin? O Father above, what heavenly light is this that shines in upon my soul? Can it be that I am Thy son, Thine erring, guilty, death-worthy son, but still Thy son—Thy poor, lost, wandering, human son, but still Thy son—a son who has strayed so far into the wilderness and has become so broken by his bondage there that he has almost forgotten his high lineage, but now at last, through Thy mercy, shown to him in the Brother-Saviour who died for him upon the Cross, now at last—O the wonder and the glory of the truth—is restored to the knowledge of his heavenly origin and of his Heavenly Father's love?"

The only reasonable explanation of the Cross of Christ is at once so simple and yet so high and so full of unutterable good for man, that sinful men are perpetually finding the message of the Cross too simple to be understood and too good to be true. There is no reasonable explanation of the immeasurable sacrifice made by God through the Cross on behalf of man, except just this, that God sets an immeasurably higher value upon sinful man

than sinful man, even in his proudest moments, ever dreams of setting upon himself. If God gives up His only-begotten Son to die at the hands of sinful man in order that sinful man may be made to know the death-worthiness of his sin, this can only mean that God does not regard sinful man as being hopelessly identified with sin, but as capable of being separated from it. And since God can never be extravagant, and yet He pays such an apparently extravagant price for the separation of man from his sin, this can only mean that in sober truth and fact, man, when separated from his sin, is really a being of inexpressible value to God, a son of His own on whom He longs to lavish his love, and for whom He has in store a destiny of unrealisable power and glory and joy. It doth not yet appear to man himself what he shall be, but his Heavenly Father knows all the power and glory and joy which in the ages to come it will be the delight of the Father to bestow and of the human son to receive. In the meantime, sinful man can be assured that this is indeed his high and glorious destiny, and that this is indeed the almost incredible value which God sets upon him, by looking to the Cross and seeing there the immeasurably great price which God is prepared to pay, and has in real fact already paid, to secure his freedom from the bondage of sin and his entrance into the great privileges of the children of God. That almost incredibly great price is the solid proof of the almost incredibly great value which God sets upon, and of the almost incredibly high destiny which God intends for His lost and almost ruined son, whose name is Man.

While then the first message of the Cross is, as we have seen, the stern message that sin is worthy of death—a message which, as it were, sets the strong cold winds of judgment blowing through man's nature, and driving out of it all the feverish, hot, and poisonous vapours of evil desire, the second message of the Cross is a message of inexhaustible joy—the message that God sees in sinful man something which is not wholly identified with sin, something which is still "God's own," something which God regards as of inexpressibly great value, and for the full possession of which He has paid an inexpressibly great price. And this second message of the Cross, as it were, sets the warm, pure, gentle airs of heavenly mercy breathing upon the bruised and broken nature of man, awaking within him and rendering natural to him lofty hopes that he had never otherwise dared to cherish, soothing him with the consciousness of having been sought after and of being now embraced by an inexpressibly strong and pitiful and tender love, and causing unexpected springs of pure and holy joy to rise welling up from the innermost depths of his nature.

So then, just as the first message of the Cross declares to the world of sinful men the reasonableness of God's inexorable hatred of sin, so does the second message of the Cross declare the reasonableness of God's love for man in spite of his sin. That message proclaims to the world and to the universe that man is not in reality what, from his present condition, he seems to be—he is not in reality the bond-servant of sin and the helpless victim of death. He is the lost heir to a heavenly

estate—a glorious estate which he would never have lost but for his own sin—an estate rich with the joys of immortal life and with the fellowship of God and the angels of God—an estate to which it seems impossible he should ever be restored, but to which, nevertheless, by such almost incredible mercy as is expressed in the Cross, he *can* be restored. It was because God knew this truth concerning man, which man did not know concerning himself, that God was justified in making the great and seemingly extravagant sacrifice for man which He made upon the Cross. Always, therefore, when the true meaning of the Cross breaks in upon a sinful soul, the truth appears as something too good to be true, and yet, since God cannot be really extravagant, as something which must needs be true. Always the Cross stands in human history proclaiming that God regards man as being other and greater and nobler than he seems to be, or than man knows himself to be. Everywhere else in human history sinful and unbelieving man is aware only of God regarding him as a sinner and punishing him for his sin. It is only at the Cross that he becomes aware, through God revealing to him the death-worthiness of sin at the price of the life of His only-begotten Son, that God regards him, in spite of his sin, as the lost heir to a heavenly estate, and is willing even to die in order that he may be restored to that estate.

It is this knowledge possessed by God and humanly acquired by Jesus Christ and expressed by Him through the Cross—this knowledge of man as the lost but not irrecoverable heir of a vacant heavenly estate, which

is the very nerve and essence of the Christian gospel. This is the good news which sets the heart bounding with a joy that never dies away, that God regards sinful man, in spite of his sin, as a lost son, who has indeed, through sin, forfeited his legal right to the privileges of God's family, but who is still capable of being replaced in the enjoyment of these inestimable privileges by a great and God-like exercise of holy mercy.

We have still, however, to answer the further question: How does sinful man who, through the Cross, is made to know that God regards his sin as worthy of death, and also that God regards him as His lost but not irrecoverable son, come also to be assured, through the Cross, that God is able and willing to save him from death and restore him to the privileges of a son of God, by extending to him, in full consistency with His holiness, a free and gracious forgiveness? Our answer must be that sinful man sees God able and willing freely and graciously to forgive the awful Crime of the Cross to those who accept the Christ whom their sin has crucified as their One and Only Saviour, and therefore he knows that God's forgiveness is real, that God's forgiveness is holy, and that God's forgiveness is extended only to those who accept Christ as their Saviour.

The wicked crucifixion of Jesus Christ was, as we have seen, the crowning crime of fallen man—a unique and unparalleled manifestation of the sinfulness of sin. How then did God deal with that crowning crime of fallen man? Has He avenged it fully? If He had, He would have brought death—the wages of sin—upon the whole human race.

Has He cared nothing for it and taken no account of it? If He had, He could not be the holy God who judges all the sins of men. Has He granted to men an indiscriminating pardon? If He had, He would have shown a mercy which was at variance with His holiness. God has taken none of these courses. He has, indeed, granted a free and gracious forgiveness for the sin which has shown itself as aiming on the Cross at His own destruction, and at the wreck of the universe, but He has granted that forgiveness only to those who, by accepting the crucified Christ as their Saviour, are enabled to become partakers of that perfect human hatred of sin and that perfect human love of righteousness which Christ through the Cross has acquired, and concerning whom, therefore, God has a guarantee that in the end they shall be freed from all complicity with sin, and made worthy to enter fully into His holy kingdom. God's dealing with the Crime of the Cross, therefore, manifests that God in Christ is able to show genuine mercy. There can be no question of forgiveness by expiation here. One crime cannot blot out another crime. Least of all can that crime, which alone manifests the real end to which all crimes and sins tend, be held to furnish God with some ground for forgiving itself. Either God, by a genuine act of wondrous mercy, must freely forgive this transcendent crime, taking all the loss and suffering upon Himself, and bearing it in patience in the holy recesses of His loving heart, or else He must let loose the terrors of His holy wrath upon the heads of the guilty sinners. He has not let loose the terrors of His wrath. Therefore He is—He

must be, and His whole action in history since the crucifixion shows Him to be—willing and able to bear in patience, and freely, royally, and graciously to forgive, even although He knows and feels, through all His holy nature, that the sin which He forgives aims at His own destruction and at the wreck of the universe.

But with equal clearness the Cross manifests that God's free and gracious forgiveness is yet holy forgiveness. For the second message—the message of mercy in the Cross—can reach the hearts of sinful men *only through the first message*—the message of judgment—the message that sin is worthy of death. Unless sinful man recognises that God has shown kindness and love and mercy to him *in this especial form—by revealing to him that his sin is worthy of death*—he cannot see or feel in the Cross that God is kind and loving and merciful to him at all. Everywhere else in this fallen world the conscience of sinful and unbelieving man becomes aware of God only as a God who is against him and who punishes him because of his sin. It is only at the Cross that he becomes aware of God as a God who loves him in spite of his sin, and this love at the Cross manifests itself, first of all, by showing him that his sin is worthy of death. But such a message cannot be felt to be a message of love and kindness by that which is “of sin” in man, for that message is a message of doom and death to all that is sinful in man. Such a message can be regarded as a message of love and kindness only by that which is “of God” in man, for such a message is a message of hope and deliverance to that which is “of God” in man. Accordingly,

sinful man is compelled to feel that the message of mercy in the Cross does not come to him as an indiscriminating message, embracing the whole of his nature, both that which is "of sin" in him and that which is "of God" in him. It is a message of death to the sinful part of his nature. It is a message of life only to that which is "of God" in his nature. It is a "living and active message, sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit"¹—a message which separates his false, sinful self from his ideal self—the true son of God in him—a message which engages him in a struggle with his false and sinful self, in which he can never pause until a complete and final victory is won and the sinful self is utterly slain. And thus it is that sinful man, as he receives the message of mercy in the Cross, is compelled at the same time to recognise that the mercy which there seeks and finds him is a holy mercy which, for all the freeness and graciousness of its forgiveness, relaxes not by one jot or tittle its utter and inexorable hatred of sin. It is not the case that God, as Dr. Denney puts it, in the Cross, "takes part with us against Himself." On the contrary, God, in the Cross, leads *us* to take part *with Him* against all that is sinful in ourselves, and on behalf of all that is God's in ourselves.

So then the Cross, as it stands in human history, keeps proclaiming to the sinful world, not merely that all human sin is worthy of spiritual death, but also that there is no necessity that man should suffer spiritual death, since God, at the cost of the life of His dear Son, has shown to sinful man both the dread reality of his danger—and the opening up of

¹ Heb. iv. 12.

a way of escape. *It proclaims the reality of God's forgiveness by being itself the great outstanding example of forgiveness.* It tells to men the wide world over that their sins cannot be too dark for God to forgive, for they cannot be darker than the sin which nailed the Saviour to the Cross; and that neither can they be too light to require forgiveness, for every smallest sin of man aims in the end at the destruction of God and the wreck of the universe. It declares to sinful man, by the greatness of the price which God pays on his behalf, that the true description of man is not "the slave of sin and the victim of death," but "the lost human son of God now become the heir of eternal life." And therefore it enables sinful man to know and to rejoice in the warm and tender, the pure and holy, the pitying and uplifting love of his Heavenly Father, and to love his Heavenly Father in return.

Nevertheless, no man is able, all in a moment, and simply by reading accurately these messages of the historical Cross, to attain to that perfect love of the will of God which is involved in a perfect repentance. The believer who is made to feel the merciful love of God expressed in the historical Cross must learn to look upward from the historical Cross to that Heavenly Empire where that living Saviour abides who, having through His free and intelligent and devoted acceptance of the Father's will that He should endure the death of the Cross for the sake of sinful men, gained a perfect human love of righteousness communicable to sinful men, waits to speak to him the word of forgiveness as a personal word coming straight from the heart of the Father to the heart of his sinful human son—and

to impart to him, by a process of spiritual discipline, that perfect human delight in and love for the will of God which must be the common property of all the children of the Father's heavenly-human home. And therefore the believer's joy in the love of God, and his conviction that that love is holy love, can never diminish or die. On the contrary, it must, like his hatred of sin, go on increasing to perfection. The more he learns of Christ—the more he comes to understand the depths of that loving heart which, for the sake of what was of God in him, was able to find so deep and holy a joy in a vocation involving such immeasurable pain—the closer he must be drawn in loving devotion to Him who loved Him, and the more he must seek to apprehend that of God in himself for the sake of which alone Christ laid hold of him. The more he assimilates the spiritual knowledge of the Christ who knew him as a human son of God while he was yet a sinner, and who died to make him a son of God in deed and in truth, the more he must become assured, until at last his assurance becomes perfect, that the merciful love which sought and found him was also a pure and holy love which, in forgiving his sin, lost not one jot or tittle of its holy hatred of sin. And it is because God finds in the faith of the believer in Christ this certainty of becoming perfect, assured knowledge that the mercy which forgives his sin is always holy mercy, that he is able, in entire consistency with His holiness, to bestow a forgiveness which is as free and gracious as it is pure and holy on the believer whose faith is rooted and grounded in the Christ of the Cross.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CONDITIONS OF DIVINE JUDGMENT.

IF the Son of God had appeared in our fallen world with the sole purpose in view of becoming qualified to be the Saviour of such men as should believe in Him, we might now regard our exposition of the Cross as being complete. But the Son of God, as is abundantly manifest from His own utterances, came to our fallen world, not for this purpose alone, but also that He might become qualified to be the Judge, on behalf of the Father, of such men as should refuse to believe. And this work of spiritual qualification proceeded side by side with the work of qualification as Saviour, and found its climax, simultaneously with that work, upon the Cross of Calvary. It is, therefore, impossible for us to regard our description of the work of Christ as being complete until we have taken account of this equally great, important, and essential work—the work of preparation for the Judgment to come.

In no respect has the expiatory theory of the Cross been more disastrously successful in hiding from the eyes of men the real truth taught by the Scriptures, than in respect to the truth of the Coming Judgment. By attempting to represent the crucifixion of Christ as being in itself a satisfaction to divine retributive justice, it has necessarily and inevitably tended to obscure and to take the sense

of spiritual reality out of the Judgment that is yet to come. In proportion as it has been believed by Christian people that God's retributive justice has been already fully satisfied in the past, in like proportion it has been difficult for them to believe that it requires any further satisfaction in the future; and still more difficult has it been to impress such a belief upon the careless and impenitent. As a matter of fact, belief in the Future Judgment as a real living spiritual force is, to the great detriment both of religion and morality, dying out in many quarters of the Christian world to-day.

Again, the expiatory theory, by its endeavours to exhibit God as satisfying His retributive justice in this extraordinary fashion—through the punishment of an entirely sinless being—and as requiring that this satisfaction should be furnished as a necessary preliminary to the manifestation of His mercy, has caused it to happen that God's retributive justice has appeared so utterly bewildering, so entirely beyond the possibility of being understood or sympathised with by large masses of men, that in many cases they have ceased to connect the idea of retributive justice with God at all.

Furthermore—and this, perhaps, is the most disastrous of all—the expiatory theory, by drawing a veil over the Crime of the Crucifixion, by hiding from the eyes of men the awful defiance of God expressed in what is in a sense the Crowning Crime of the Human Race, has done more than any other contributing cause to prevent a shuddering horror of sin from taking possession of the souls of men, and to keep them from feeling that every word in the Scriptures that speaks of a Judgment yet to

come, full of unspeakable dread for the impenitent and unbelieving, is a word of utter truth and expresses a real intention of God which without a doubt He will execute, not in any merely figurative fashion, but in historical fact, every whit as real as the crucifixion itself.

But when we remove the veil woven by the expiatory theory across the face of the truth, we see, first of all, that *never in the whole history of the world has God's retributive justice as yet been "satisfied."* Dim adumbrations of that dread reality are all that the human race knows by experience. God's justice has never yet been executed to the full on any human soul in this world. Least of all has it been executed on the person of God's Eternal Son. As yet, it is God's mercy that has been in the forefront in all His dealings with sinful men.

Secondly, we see that it is of the very nature of God that *always His mercy must precede His retributive justice.* Not till after His mercy has been offered to and discerned and rejected by the sinner can the retributive justice of God be executed. Not till all that infinite mercy can do to win the sinner to life has been done can God's retributive justice fall in its full measure upon the sinner.

And thirdly, we see that when all that infinite mercy can do has been done, and still the sinner refuses to accept the mercy offered, then God would not be God, and sin would not be the thing of unutterable guilt and horror that the Cross reveals it to be—the thing that threatens to wreck the universe and destroy God—if God did not at last

pour forth upon the soul which has thus wilfully and deliberately identified itself with sin the vials of His holy avenging wrath. Dr. Crawford expresses his wonder¹ that Robertson of Brighton should have rejected the expiatory theory of the Cross and yet have been found holding that there is a retributive justice in God which may express itself in punishment of the sinner, even when no hope of reclaiming the sinner by that punishment is entertained. The real wonder is that any one who holds the expiatory theory of the Cross should be able to preserve any faith in God's retributive justice at all. It is only when we see that the lightnings of divine wrath were *not* aimed at or quenched in the heart of the Sufferer on the Cross, but that, shooting forth from the Unseen Presence behind the Cross, and passing through the Sufferer and from the Sufferer, they are even now aiming themselves against and seeking to quench themselves in the hardened hearts of the sin-loving beings who are ready, with their eyes now open to the sinfulness of sin, to repeat the awful Crime of the Cross—it is only then that the dread reality of God's retributive justice comes home to our consciences.

And when we see these things we also see that the task of *judging* a fallen world is every whit as great and every whit as seemingly impossible a problem for God as is the task of *saving* a fallen world. It is strange to think how comparatively ready men have been to accept the truth that the manifestation of His mercy to sinful men must have been a problem for God, and how blind they have been to the companion truth that the manifesta-

¹ *The Atonement*, p. 418.

tion of His retributive justice must have constituted for God a problem equally great and apparently insoluble. Many men who have been willing to believe that God must take pains to show mercy, not in indiscriminate, haphazard fashion, but in accordance with holy spiritual law, have yet imagined that God can show His justice *anyhow*—by any kind of arbitrary exercise of despotic power which He may choose to put in force. In no respect has God been more woefully misjudged by men than in respect to the manifestation of His retributive justice. God's justice is as *real* as His mercy, and it is as *God-like* as His mercy. It is every whit as truly subject to holy spiritual law as His mercy is, and therefore every whit as worthy of the reverence and worship of God-fearing men.

We are not, however, here concerned so much with the Coming Judgment as it will actually be, as with the work of preparation for that Judgment which found its climax on the Cross. Nevertheless, in order to understand this work of preparation we must, first of all, set clearly before our minds the need for a work of Judgment. We have already described the situation caused in the world by the entrance of sin so as to show that a work of redemption involving the death of the Christ of God was both necessary and possible. It now falls to us so to describe the situation caused by sin as to show that a work of preparation for Judgment, involving the death of the Christ of God, was also necessary and possible.

Clearly there was no necessity for such a work of preparation for Judgment if it was known to God that the work of merciful redemption would, sooner

or later, either in this world or the world to come, result in the gathering in to the Kingdom of God of all the race of men. But in the very nature of things it is impossible that, when God is dealing with a fallen world so as to bring that world into harmony with the normal Heavenly Empire, there should be any mechanical certainty that all the sinful men in this fallen world should accept God's offered mercy. A sovereignty of love and holiness cannot be won by mere omnipotence. The performance of impossibilities is not contained in the idea of omnipotence, and it is for ever impossible to compel love. If man were not left in possession of his moral freedom, then no man could ever love God. But if man be left in possession of real freedom, then, with all reverence it must be said, even God Himself cannot render it certain that every man shall accept His offered mercy. No, not even though it be held that beyond the grave, as well as on this side of it, the mercy of God is still held out to men. The mercy of God may conceivably be offered to some men for a time beyond the grave, but that is a totally different thing from the statement that the mercy of God remains available to every human soul *for ever* and that every human soul will at last *accept* that mercy.

The latter belief cannot be held without ignoring what may be called the doctrine of the Breaking-strain of the human soul, which is clearly taught in the Scriptures. No human soul possesses the infinite capacity for repentance and faith which this theory ascribes to it. Jesus is aware of a sin that is never forgiven either in this world or that which is to come.¹ The Scriptures are aware of human

¹ Matt. xii. 32.

souls that can find no place for repentance and cannot again be renewed to the life of the spirit.¹ One of the apostles begins his career with the same opportunities as his comrades, and yet, on the testimony of the Lord Himself, he, even in this world, becomes "a devil,"² and it would have been better for him had he never been born.³ The plain inference from these statements is that the finite human soul does not possess an infinite capacity for repentance; that there must come a time in the history of every impenitent soul when the strain made upon it by the effort to continue rejecting the ever-increasing light of God shall finally exhaust its powers of repentance, and thus render it impossible for the light of God from that point onwards to have any other effect upon the nature than to be a consuming fire upon it, wearing it away until nothing remains but the dust and ashes—the spiritual dust and ashes—of its true self.

At what particular stage this point of the Breaking-strain of the Soul shall be reached, no man can tell. We can be sure that it will not be reached in any case until the mercy of God has done all that mercy can do to win the sinner to repentance. But we can also be sure that, in the very act of thus seeking his salvation, mercy itself must drive him nearer and nearer to that awful stage in his history when the point of the breaking-strain must be arrived at. That point may or may not be reached at the hour of physical death. If it is, it is merely a coincidence. That point may be reached *before* physical death or *after* it. No man can possibly know *when* it will be reached in the case of any of his fellow-men, for no man can know

¹ Heb. vi. 6.² John vi. 70.³ Matt. xxvi. 24.

when God's mercy shall have done its uttermost in offering itself, or *when* the soul of his fellow-man shall have passed the fatal point when a saving repentance becomes for ever impossible. All that we can surely know is that the more clearly and forcibly the mercy of God is impressed upon a soul as being the holy and lovely reality that it is, the nearer must that soul approach to the breaking-strain point, if it still continues to reject that mercy. And since God must continue to offer His mercy until in every case He has offered it to the uttermost, therefore in every case in which the mercy is rejected until the point of the breaking-strain has been reached, God has to deal with a sinner who, although he is by no means yet a fiend, and remains in possession of many of the noble and God-like faculties belonging to human nature, yet will certainly never put these faculties to their God-intended use, but will always and inevitably devote them to those sinful purposes which would have for their final issue, if they were ever permitted to reach that issue, the destruction of God and the wreck of the universe. If then in such a case God has no power of retributive justice or no will to use such a terrible power, what does it mean? It means simply that God must give consent to His own destruction and to the wreck of the universe. It means that rather than bring to naught that which would bring Himself and His Heavenly Empire to naught, God will agree that He Himself and all the holy beings whose life depends on Him shall be utterly destroyed. It is to nothing less than to believe that God will actually do this incredible thing that we are invited when we are

asked, in the interests of pity, to banish from our minds all idea of ascribing to God either the power of enforcing retributive justice or the will to use that power. But so to believe is for any sane man an utter impossibility.

We see then that if God be really God there must be in His nature the element of retributive justice, and that He must be able and willing to manifest this quality, not merely so long as the reformation of the sinner is in view, but also after all hope of such reformation is past. What then are the ends which God must seek to attain by the manifestation of His retributive justice upon impenitent sin? First of all, He must seek to render the sinner utterly powerless to work further evil, and to this end He must strip him of all the God-given powers which he has been abusing. And in the second place, God must seek to make the sinner aware of the real nature of the crime of which he has been guilty, so that God's sentence shall be ratified in the court of the sinner's own conscience, and there acknowledged as just. We cannot conceive of God's justice being truly worthy of Himself unless it secures both these objects—the complete ending of the power to work evil, and the full acknowledgment by the sinner of the justice of his doom. Once God's hand has finally fallen on the rebel, then there can be no more rebellion. Once God's sentence has been finally spoken, then, though the fullest opportunity be given for every voice to be heard, there cannot be heard, even from the condemned soul itself, the faintest protest or appeal.

But if these are the ends which God must seek,

then it seems at first sight impossible that He could ever attain them both. For it has to be remembered that God can never permit sinful man to learn by actual experience what is the final issue that his sin would have if it were not continually checked and restrained. God cannot permit the destruction of Himself and His Heavenly Empire in order that sinful man may see for himself, by actual vision and experience, what is the fearful end towards which his sin is tending. As a matter of fact, God, the moment sin appears, begins to check and restrain and punish it. God so orders things in the fallen world that man's first and smallest sin immediately recoils upon himself, weakening him in his noblest powers, and involving him in such a network of disastrous consequences that, in spite of all his struggles, it is simply impossible for him, of himself, to find his way back to God and to the possession of the true powers of his nature again. And in the forefront of these disastrous consequences is the spiritual blindness which falls upon the sinner's soul, and renders all true knowledge of God or of sin impossible. Here then we see sinful man, under the retributive justice of God expressed in the natural order of things, tending to become stripped of the God-given human powers which he has abused. But here also we see him becoming less and less capable of being judged in any proper sense of the term. For the further this process is continued, then the further away sinful man is driven from that condition of being in which he is able to understand God's dealings with him and to acknowledge that his punishment is justly inflicted. He has never

known the dreadful reality of sin by any clear vision of the harm that it means towards God. He knows it only by experience of the harm that it brings to himself, and even of that harm he has but a dim, confused, and hugely inadequate knowledge.

So then it would appear as though God may *crush* sinful man—may cause that he shall sink into utter degradation and powerlessness, and so perish as the beasts perish, utterly ignorant of his high destiny, and becoming a mere handful of spiritual ashes. But it would also appear as though God, in working towards this one end sought by His retributive justice, and preventing the evil-doer from causing further harm, were at the same time rendering it impossible ever to attain the other end which also He must keep in view, namely to bring the sinner to understand the nature of his sin, and to compel him to assent to the justice of his doom. The more God brings spiritual blindness and impotence upon sinful man, the more He seems to shut out the possibility that sinful man shall ever recognise the sinfulness of his sin or be made to confess that his sentence of death is just.

On the other hand, if it should be suggested that God, for the sake of enabling man to perceive the sinfulness of his sin, might refrain from punishing him with blindness and impotence, then it has to be pointed out that, in so doing, God, by furnishing sinful man with the powers and privileges which belong to sinless man, would be becoming an accomplice of sin, and instead of showing to man the evil of sin, would be teaching him that there is no evil in it whatsoever.

Here then we see what, speaking after the manner

of men, we may venture to call the dilemma of God in regard to judging the sinful world. The more God punishes sin as sin deserves to be punished, the less God is able to reach the conscience of the sinner and compel him to acknowledge the justice of his punishment. On the other hand, the more God refrains from punishing sin as it deserves to be punished, the less He is able to convince the sinner that sin is deserving of punishment at all. We have, as it were, already in spirit crossed the gulf which separated sinful but penitent man from the mercy of God. And now looking back from the God-ward side of that gulf we see that it has another aspect of which before we were unaware. We see that not only cannot sinful man cross the gulf so as to avail himself of the mercy of God, but also even God Himself cannot, unless He makes special provision for doing so, cross the gulf so as to reach with His holy judgments the conscience of the impenitent sinner.

But it is precisely this special provision for bringing His holy judgments home to the conscience of the impenitent sinner that God has made through the incarnation and the delivering up to death at the hands of sinful men of His only-begotten Son. By so doing God has rendered possible that which was otherwise impossible, namely His judging of the world in righteousness—His judging of the world in such a manner that they who are condemned by His judgment shall be left speechless—without excuse—utterly unable to breathe one whisper of remonstrance against the execution of their immeasurably dreadful doom. That this is indeed the truth—that through the

qualifying of Jesus Christ to be the Judge of men, impenitent sinners have cause to fear, not that they shall be *crushed* by some stupendous manifestation of omnipotent force, but—what is far more to be feared—that they shall be *judged* with a spiritual judgment in which the holy wrath of God against sin shall be expressed in all its intolerable dreadfulness, and recognised in all its unimpeachable righteousness, we must now endeavour to show.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CROSS AND THE JUDGMENT OF SIN.

How did the Sinless Man, who became by His experience on earth qualified to be the Saviour of all who should believe in Him, also become qualified by the same experience to become the Judge of all who should refuse to believe? Such is the question to which we must now find an answer. How did God, who was unable otherwise to reach the conscience of the impenitent sinner so as to convince him of the righteousness of his doom, become enabled to achieve this end of His retributive justice through the incarnation and death and resurrection of His only-begotten Son? Our answer is that the very same experience which enabled Jesus Christ to sympathetically communicate, through the Holy Spirit, a perfect, assured human knowledge of the truth of God to those willing to receive Him, enabled Him also to forcibly impress a perfect, assured human knowledge of the truth of God upon the consciences of those unwilling to receive Him. To forcibly impress His own devoted love of righteousness and His own fervent hatred of sin upon the sinner, is for ever an impossibility to Jesus. Such spiritual love and hatred can *never* be reproduced by any kind of compulsion. But truth which men decide to reject still remains truth which the same men

may be compelled to acknowledge. The power of vision may remain, while the power to take advantage of vision has departed. The heart and will may have ceased to be capable of exercising their proper functions, and yet the reason and conscience remain fully susceptible to the invasion of spiritual truth.

And further, the same truth of God which, willingly received at the proper time, becomes a message of life and joy and salvation, becomes when, after the time for willing reception is for ever past, it is forcibly impressed upon the conscience, a message of condemnation and spiritual pain unspeakable. It is the very same light which fills all heaven with its glorious radiance, which becomes the consuming spiritual fire of hell. And it was the same experience on earth which qualified Jesus Christ to be the Eternal Light of the human heaven, which also qualified Him to be the Eternal Fire of the human hell.

Further still, Jesus found a stern satisfaction in becoming qualified to be the Judge of impenitent sin, which was every whit as holy, true, and God-like as was the tender joy which He found in becoming qualified to be the Saviour of penitent sinners. Just as truly as we may say that for the pure and holy joy of the loving Saviour set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame, so also we may say that for the stern and holy satisfaction of the righteous Judge set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame.

Such an idea as that thrown out by Dr. Hodge in his *Systematic Theology*, Vol. iii. p. 875, is utterly inadmissible. Dr. Hodge there says,

“Christ wept over Jerusalem. So He may weep over the doom of the impenitent wicked; and yet leave them to their fate.” In these few words the whole weakness of the Rabbinical school of Protestant theology stands revealed. This conception of Christ as weeping Judge is utterly and even intolerably unscriptural. The Scripture account of Christ the Judge leaves no room for any tears in His eyes, for “His eyes are like a flame of fire.”¹ So long as Christ weeps over any human soul there is something to be pitied in that soul, and therefore there is room for mercy to reach that soul, and Christ presents Himself to that soul, not as Judge, but as Saviour. The fire of the holy anger of Christ can fall upon no man until all room for mercy is gone, but when it does fall it must be fire indeed, and both the whole mind and the whole heart of the Judge must be deliberately and harmoniously expressed therein. Men do not and cannot believe in the reality of a judgment by Jesus Christ in which the *heart* of the Judge is at war with His *mind*.

But this inability to realise the stern satisfaction found by Jesus in His vocation to be the Judge of impenitent sin results, first of all, from failure to realise what may be called the truth of the Self-respect of God. God owes it to Himself that, while He may endure with patience for a time the continued existence of a fallen race who are neither the perfectly holy beings that God desires them to be nor yet the utterly evil beings that Satan would fain make of them, yet He shall not endure what is equivalent to a martyrdom of Himself *for ever*. God owes it to His own holy nature to see to it that everywhere throughout His universe either His holy

¹ Rev. i. 14.

will shall be perfectly done by willing and holy servants, or else that the holiness of His will shall be fully expressed in the utter condemnation and complete severance from power and joy and all that makes true life, of every sinful nature that is willing to resist His mercy to the uttermost. In either case the anomaly of prosperous sin is removed and God's holy will, as it pervades the universe, encounters nowhere any successful resistance. The one state of affairs that God cannot possibly permanently endure is that state of affairs at present existing in our fallen world—the state of being lukewarm—neither cold nor hot—neither wholly good nor wholly evil—that state of affairs in which sinful beings are found enjoying and abusing God-imparted powers and privileges which are intended by God solely for beings altogether pure and holy.

Therefore God sent His Son to the fallen world, not merely that He might save such as should believe, but also that He might execute the sentence of righteous judgment on those who should refuse to believe. And Jesus embraced both parts of His great mission with an equal loyalty, and with equal recognition in each of the holiness of the Father's will. He was no more willing to serve the Father by becoming the Saviour of penitent sinners than He was willing to serve the Father by becoming the Judge of impenitent sinners. He was no more willing to manifest the wondrous mercy of the Father to the uttermost than He was willing to vindicate the preciousness of that mercy by becoming the executor of the Father's righteous sentence upon all who should spurn and reject it.

But, in the second place, inability to realise the holy satisfaction found by Jesus in His vocation as Judge results also from failure to realise the full effect upon sinful human nature of deliberately spurning and rejecting the offered mercy of God. That effect is nothing less than to change the human nature of the sinner into the devilish nature of the fiend—to destroy, so far as it is capable of destruction, the image of God in man—to extinguish, so far as it is capable of being extinguished, that which is “God’s own” in man, and therefore to remove from man’s nature that element which alone furnishes God with a worthy motive for seeking man’s salvation. Disobedience to God’s holy law of righteousness places man in danger, but leaves him still human and still redeemable. But rejection of God’s holy mercy extinguishes every vestige of true humanity, and leaves nothing in the nature on which redeeming love can operate. The man who has rejected God’s mercy in Christ, after it has been offered to the uttermost, is no longer a man. He is a devil. He is a withered branch fit for nothing but to be cast into the fire, and it is in every way right and just and good that there should be One who is both able and willing to cast such withered branches into the fire.

It becomes us, therefore, to realise that although Christ’s vocation as Saviour is always the aspect of His divine commission which presents itself first to men, and is naturally more readily welcomed by men, yet, to Christ Himself, His vocation to become qualified as the Judge of the impenitent sinners who should reject the mercy of God was an aspect of His divine commission equally sacred and

obligatory—equally requiring from Him perfect sympathy with and perfect obedience to the Father's will, and also fitted, through its successful accomplishment, to afford to His soul a stern and holy satisfaction.

Sinful man, blind prisoner in a fallen world, has no experimental knowledge of the perfect beauty and order and joy of the Heavenly Empire, and therefore he has no adequate conception of the offence that he and his world-prison constitute to God. He has no adequate conception of the ardour of longing with which God desires to wipe this blot from His holy universe, nor of the costliness of that divine patience which, for mercy's sake, permits the blot to remain for yet a little while longer. But what sinful man does not know, or but dimly guesses, the Sinless Man knows with a perfect and assured knowledge, and therefore it is that from the lips of the Sinless Man Himself proceed the weightiest of all warnings, the most urgent of all entreaties, the most vehement of all denunciations, and the most awe-inspiring of all threatenings that have ever fallen on the ears of men. So long as it is believed that God's retributive justice has already been satisfied in the past, or that God's final doom can fall upon any to whom God's mercy in Christ has not been offered to the uttermost, or that God's mercy can be finally spurned and rejected without converting the men who reject it into fiends, or that Jesus will weep because of the righteous doom which He Himself inflicts, so long will the awful words of Jesus be regarded as words of little meaning—words not to be taken too much in earnest—

words that cannot possibly stand for an infinitely real and unspeakably terrible truth. But when we see that not one of these suppositions is really based on Scripture or on fact, then it is as if our deaf ears were suddenly unsealed, and what before was but a far-off boding murmur, of purport inarticulate and vague, becomes in a moment the pealing thunder of heaven proclaiming with soul-shaking voice the unmistakable reality of the lightnings of the wrath of God.

But now it may be asked: If the effect of rejecting the mercy of God in Christ is to convert sinful man into a fiend, how is it possible for Christ ever to reach the conscience of the fiendish man with His holy judgments so as to convince him that his doom is just? If, through disobedience to the law of righteousness, man incurs a punishment of spiritual blindness which prevents him from ever, of himself, attaining to a real knowledge of the truth of God, how much more may we not expect him, through his rejection of the mercy of God, to incur a punishment of spiritual blindness deeper still, which will still more effectually prevent him from attaining to a knowledge of the real nature of the mercy he has spurned? This is true. The blindness of soul caused by disobedience to the law of righteousness is great and deep indeed, and incurable by sinful man himself, but it is not incurable by the Christ of God. And there is a blindness of soul greater and deeper still, caused by wilful rejection of the mercy of God and deliberate quenching of the Holy Spirit, and this blindness of soul is incurable even by the Christ of God. "For judgment," said Jesus, "I am come into this world,

that they which see not may see, and that they which see might be made blind.'"¹ To finally reject the mercy of God in Christ is to become subject to a blindness which is incurable even by the Christ of God.

But a blindness which is *incurable* is not therefore a blindness which is *invincible*. Eyes which will not see for their salvation are still eyes which may be compelled to open for their condemnation. That blindness of the spiritual eye, that deafness of the spiritual ear, that hardening of the spiritual nature which results from the wilful and deliberate and final rejection of the mercy of God in Christ, effectually prevents for evermore the truth of God from being communicated to the soul, *for its salvation, by the Holy Spirit*. But it does not prevent the truth of God from being flashed in burning light into the soul, *for its condemnation, by the risen Lord Himself*, when He appears before the sinner in all the majesty of His heavenly might, and in all the holy wrath of His scorned and outraged mercy.

That deep, incurable blindness of the soul which is caused by quenching the Holy Spirit, and which for evermore renders impossible the salvation which is only possible through willing acceptance of the Holy Spirit, is yet a blindness which cannot remain proof against the appearance in His glory of the Christ who died and rose again. We have only to conceive what would have happened had the risen Lord appeared in His glorified body, as He so easily could have done, before Pilate, or Annas, or Caiaphas, or the Sanhedrin, in order to realise how utterly and completely the blindness, which is proof

¹ John ix. 39.

against the presentation of the truth through the Holy Spirit, must yield to the presentation of the truth through the visible appearance of the glorified Christ. The risen Lord did not thus appear to any of the sinful men who took part in procuring His crucifixion, for He knew that they had committed their great crime in large measure through ignorance, and therefore the time for their judgment had not yet come. And the risen Lord will never appear in His glory to judge and condemn any human soul to whom the message of His forgiving love has not been brought, and to whom the Holy Spirit has not striven to the uttermost to communicate that message in all its holy and beautiful reality, and for whom the effort to reject that message has not resulted in the obliteration of the image of God and the changing of the nature of the man into the nature of a fiend. But when the risen Lord shall appear in His glory before such a man, then, through His appearance, shall the truth of God be flashed in upon that man's conscience in a spiritual human language which he cannot choose but hear nor fail to understand, and with a power of absolute authority which he cannot even begin to question.

And the truth of God being thus forcibly impressed instead of being sympathetically communicated and willingly received, and invading the nature after all in the nature which might have welcomed it and profited by it has been extinguished, will appear to that nature, not as glorious light, but as burning fire. And the fire will be the fire of the infinitely holy and unspeakably dreadful wrath of the Eternal God. And the purport of the message conveyed by the appearance

in His glory of the crucified Christ will be to every impenitent soul essentially the same: "Once ye were sinful men, blind and helpless, wretched and impotent, moving in your blindness down the highway of death. And I had compassion upon you, and came forth from the bosom of the Father for your salvation. And, that your eyes might be opened and that I might save you from death, I suffered you to nail Me to the Cross and pierce My side with the spear. I gave Myself to the death of shame that sinful men might live for evermore. And a great multitude that no man can number have found through Me the Way of everlasting life. But ye have denied My love. Ye have quenched the Holy Spirit whom I have sent. Ye have chosen to blind your eyes to the light and to harden your hearts against the mercy of God. And now behold, ye have prepared the Cross of shame and death for Me once more. Once more have ye made ready for Me the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Even now ye hold in your hands the nails and the spear, ready to pierce My hands and feet and heart anew. But it is not now as it was in the days of old. The day of your grace is ended. The time for patience is past. As ye have sown, so shall ye reap, and the day of the harvest is come. Ye that would destroy God, upon you has destruction come. Ye that have slain the Christ within you, upon you now falls the second death. Ye that were men and might have been saints of God, ye that were men and now are fiends, unto you be the lot and portion of the fiends. Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!"

Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us," and to the hills, "Cover us," but the mountains shall not crush them nor the hills protect them, but the truth of the despised and rejected Christ shall be in their souls for ever a burning and consuming fire. Eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the intolerable dreadfulness of the doom which falls upon that soul on which are poured forth the vials of the wrath of God. And yet, though the fullest opportunity for appeal shall be given, neither from angels nor saints nor fiends shall be heard one faintest whisper of protest against the righteousness of that judgment which is delivered from the throne of Power and Love and Holiness by the once despised and rejected Christ of the Cross.

Here ends our exposition of the meaning of the Cross of Christ. It is an exposition which makes three great claims for itself. In the first place, it claims to be the Scriptural explanation of the Cross. It takes account of all the data given in the Scriptures, and does not, like the expiatory theory on the one hand, and the "moral influence" theories on the other, require for its maintenance either the suppression or the distortion of any single passage or group of passages in the Old or the New Testament.

Secondly, it claims to be an intelligible explanation of the Cross, and to satisfy the three requirements of an adequate explanation. It describes the situation caused in the world by the entrance of sin so as to show that a special work of redemp-

tion and preparation for judgment on the part of God—a work carried out by the Incarnate Son of God, and involving His death—was both necessary and possible. It describes with accuracy what God really did through Christ in view of this situation. It shows how it was that what God did through Christ effected the end in view, and successfully dealt with the evils caused by sin.

And thirdly, it claims to express accurately what previous theories of the Cross prevalent in the Church expressed inaccurately and erroneously. It preserves and places in intelligible light the truths which underlay the Satanic-ransom theory, the expiatory theory, and the various “moral influence” theories of the Cross.

In order, however, that the first and third of these claims may be made good, it is necessary to exhibit more fully than has yet been done the corroboration that is to be found for this theory in the religious history of man as it is revealed in the Scriptures, and in the developing theology of the Christian Church. And since, in such a discussion, it will be necessary to make frequent reference to the explanation of the Cross which has now been set forth, it is desirable to find some distinctive title by which it may be known. We might have found considerable difficulty here, but happily the Scriptures themselves furnish us with the unique word which fitly describes such a unique event as is the death of Christ construed as we have construed it. We have tried to show that through His death on the Cross, the Christ of God became a medium or channel through which God’s holy mercy might flow forth to sinners without loss

of holiness. Just such a medium or channel of holy mercy is described in the Scriptures as a "propitiation." The word has often been tortured into meaning "expiation," but in reality contains nothing of an expiatory sense. Adopting this word then in its scriptural significance, and refusing to read into it anything that means "satisfaction to retributive justice," we may, in distinction from both the expiatory and the "moral influence" theories, describe the explanation set forth in the foregoing pages as the "propitiatory" theory of the Cross, and by this name we shall in future refer to it.

PART III.—CORROBORATIVE.

CHAPTER XV.

CORROBORATIVE VIEW OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY.

DOES the propitiatory theory of the Cross find itself corroborated by the history of man before the Cross? We propose to show in this chapter that it does.

When we state the problem presented to God by the entrance of sin into the world, as the propitiatory theory demands that we shall state it, then we find that it is no less a problem than this: "How to bring sinful man, who does not, naturally, believe that sin is worthy of death, to believe that God really means what He says when He affirms that such is the truth; and yet, at the same time, to believe that the God who says this and means it, and enforces His meaning with constant and unremitting punishments of sin, including spiritual blindness and physical death, is both able and willing to provide for and extend to sinful man a forgiveness which is absolutely free and gracious, and yet entirely consistent with perfect holiness." Mercifully to save sinful man while still continuing to punish him—to impress spiritual truth upon his conscience while inflicting spiritual blindness and

impotence upon his soul—to teach him under such conditions that life was to be found only in that God in whose eyes his sin was worthy of death—such was the task of inconceivable difficulty which God undertook. Such was the task which in the Scriptures we find God successfully accomplishing.

But little record remains to us of the first stage of the task, namely the descent of man into paganism. The traditions enshrined in the earlier chapters of Genesis—the traditions preserved by the spiritual aristocracy of the human race—furnish almost the only material we possess from which any conclusions can be drawn, and they give no adequate hint of the enormous tract of time which must have been covered by this stage of human history. We may be very sure, however, that the fall of man—the descent into paganism—was not accomplished all in a moment or in a few years or in a few generations. The first sin was an apparently slight infringement of God's holy law—some deed equivalent to the plucking of one forbidden fruit from amongst a thousand others which were not forbidden. And God's punishment of that first sin was appropriate to the character of the sin. It was no fierce and sudden launching of divine thunderbolts. There was no overwhelming outward catastrophe. There was no instantaneous conversion of the noble and God-like human soul into the soul of a heathen. It was but slowly and almost imperceptibly that the subtle poison did its baneful work of corruption. Even as a sailor falling overboard in calm weather from his ship thinks that, being able to swim, he can, with no very great exertion, overtake the vessel and pull

himself on board again by some trailing rope, but gradually finds that his efforts are all in vain, gradually sees the ship passing onwards out of sight, gradually finds the storm-winds rising and the night closing down upon him so that he knows no longer how to direct his course, so was it with sinful man in his descent into the night of pagan darkness. He had entered into sin thinking that God did not really mean what He said when He affirmed that the wages of sin is death, and now he had to learn by stern and dire experience that God did mean what He said.

At first it seemed as though God had not spoken the truth, for man had sinned and man was still alive. We know now that it was only God's mercy that kept him existing in the world with a history still before him. But to primitive man himself the facts might easily bear the construction that God did not, after all, mean what He said in affirming that sin was worthy of death. He could now argue with Himself, "God in my conscience said I would surely die, and behold, I am not dead. I have still a history in the world. Surely then I was right all the while, and now, if my inclinations and appetites impel me to enjoy other sinful pleasures as yet untasted, why should I deny myself? Conscience keeps telling me that the wages of sin is death, but if conscience deceived me before it is probably deceiving me again." And so man went on to sin yet more, and in so doing brought down upon himself in greater and ever greater severity the judgments of God. In soul and conscience, in intellect and body, in circumstance and history, he became ever less and less the being he

was meant to be. He came to think of that physical death which was never meant to enter into his lot at all as being a natural and inevitable law—which, for him, it never was. Jealousy and strife, greed and pride, hatred and murder, sensual indulgences, from which at an earlier period in his descent he would have recoiled in horror, became to him things natural and pleasing. And ever the deeper he plunged into sin, and ever the more daringly he defied God, while still he found that God did not blot him from the earth, ever did he find it more difficult to believe that sin is worthy of death, and ever the more complete became his spiritual blindness. His first desperate and futile efforts to retrieve himself and win his own way back to God were gradually abandoned. His guilty fears tended to be swallowed up in guilty greediness for the pleasures of sin. God almost vanished from his mind, and duty became a thing of naught. So, as the long centuries passed, the long, sad process of degeneration continued, and the descent into paganism was at last accomplished. Evil desire had conceived and brought forth sin, and sin, when it was full-grown, had brought forth death.¹ After we know not how many centuries of existence we find man reduced to the miserable condition described in Genesis vi. 5, “And the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

And yet, though man, when he thus comes first within the view of history, has come from above downwards, and not, as naturalism supposes, from

¹ James i. 15.

beneath upwards, yet in a sense he has been making progress all the while. Though he has been following the line of a descending curve, he has still been moving onwards. He has been gaining genuine experience of the fruits of sin. Instead of becoming God's noble and God-like viceroy on earth, he has become a miserable, evil-hearted, wretched-fortuned being. The mist of spiritual ignorance lies around his path. The film of spiritual blindness clings upon his eyes. The weakness of spiritual impotence paralyses his noblest powers. He knows not whence he has come nor whither he is going. He is a riddle and a torment to himself. He appears to be moving on to hopeless ruin. Nevertheless, he has now gained such genuine experience of the fruits of sin that, if that experience can only be now illuminated for him by the truth of God, then he is in a position to learn the great lesson which God all along has been striving to impress upon him, namely that God really means what He says when He affirms that the wages of sin is death.

But who evangelised the world, when in all the world there was no evangelist? Who acted as missionary to the heathen, when all the world was heathen, and in all the world there was no missionary? The only possible answer is that God must have been His own missionary. There was no power resident in man to prevent the descent into paganism from proceeding onward and downward to utter ruin and the complete extinction of human history.

But what does it mean when we say that God acted as His own missionary? To suppose that

God could compel man to hear and believe any message He chose is out of the question. God must be true to his own nature, and to His own settled order, and to the true constitution of man. To say, therefore, that God acted as His own missionary is to say that God must have with perfect wisdom adapted His external punishments of matured sin so that, through the Holy Spirit, He might impress what little of spiritual susceptibility was still left in man with the conviction (first) that God really means what He says when He affirms that sin is worthy of death, and (second) that in the very act of revealing this, God was showing mercy to man and indicating that there was some door of hope yet open for him.

And this is precisely what, according to the Scriptures, we find God doing. We find Him sending devastating floods upon corrupt peoples, and yet sparing survivors who are enabled to understand that it is because of their corruptions that these peoples are swept away. We find Him overwhelming cities of sin like Sodom and Gomorrah with outbursts of volcanic fire, and yet at the same time leaving men alive who, through the teaching of the Spirit, are enabled to interpret for themselves and their posterity God's meaning in these awful judgments. We do not require to believe that the men who were thus spared understood perfectly all that was done. They were but a little superior in spiritual discernment to their neighbours who perished. Neither do we require to maintain that a literally accurate account of all that took place has been handed down to us. But we may be very sure that behind these imperfect

descriptions there were real historical facts, very real and terrible judgments of God upon exceedingly sinful and corrupted peoples, and that it is just because of these terrible facts, wrought into human history and illuminated for the survivors by the Holy Spirit, that the truth was at last in some measure impressed upon the sin-blinded conscience of fallen man that God really means what He says when He affirms that sin is worthy of death.

It is apparent, however, that this measure of the truth must have been conveyed to fallen man at a great cost—at the cost of almost completely hiding from man's view the gracious side of God's character. God, in bringing man to this stage in his history, was compelled to show to man the stern severity of His holiness, unrelieved by any adequate manifestation of His tenderness and love. Man's soul was therefore filled with a blind dread of God. He knew now that that which he had formerly disbelieved was true. He knew now that *God* did reckon sin as worthy of death. But man was still very far from holding the truth that sin is worthy of death *as a clear conviction of his own*. He did not as yet know what was really sin and what was not sin, for he had almost completely lost sight of God's true character. And not knowing God's character, he could not know God's will. And not knowing God's will, he could not know what was contrary to God's will. Therefore, in his blind fear, he stumbled into every form of error. He reckoned actions to be sins which were no sins. What were really sins of the deepest dye he either passed over

lightly or even performed as religious acts well-pleasing to God. Accordingly, it now became the mighty task of God to enable man, while keeping that which had already been won, namely the inward conviction that God regards sin as worthy of death, to acquire a true knowledge of the tender mercy which also belonged to His holy character, and while encouraging him to trust in that mercy, to impress the truth upon his conscience that he could never, of himself, comply with the conditions of that mercy, and therefore needed a Saviour through whom that mercy could become available for him.

Here it is needful for us to keep in mind the position in which man was placed once it was fairly borne in upon his conscience that God regards sin as worthy of death. He had then to find an answer to the question, "How is it that such a holy God permits such a sinful being as I am to continue to live?" And the finding of the answer to that question was a most momentous thing for man. It is according to the answer that he finds that man determines whether he is to remain pagan or not. In the ancient world there are found practically only two answers to this question—the pagan and the Jewish answer. Of the pagans there are two classes which do not, however, remain distinct, but tend to merge in each other.

One class of pagans, whom we may call the dark-souled pagans, find the answer in these terms: "God, who reckons sin as worthy of death, suffers us to live only on condition that we offer up to Him human sacrifices—other men's lives instead of our own—or come as near to that as possible." The

other class, whom we may call the light-souled pagans, answer, "It cannot be that God requires human sacrifices; therefore it is a mistake to think that God regards sin as worthy of death; therefore God does not regard sin very seriously at all; therefore flowers and fruits are quite sufficient and acceptable sacrifices." This is the paganism which by and by passes, by a quite intelligible transition, into utter scepticism, utter denial that there is any God at all, or, what is the same thing, ends in the deification of self or of the State, and sinks into complete moral corruption.

In the *Commentaries of Julius Caesar* we find a notable account of the ideas of the dark-souled pagans written by one who was himself a chief priest of the light-souled pagans. "The whole Gallic nation," writes the Roman general, "is very much given to religious observances. Those who are affected with serious diseases, or whose occupations bring them into battles or dangers, either offer up men as sacrificial victims or else solemnly vow that they will offer up themselves. They employ the Druids as the official ministers of their sacrifices. They consider that unless the life of man is offered up instead of the life of man, it is not possible to placate the offended majesty of the immortal gods. They have a regularly instituted system of such sacrifices for the nation or tribe as a whole, as well as for individuals. Some of them have enormous images made of basket-work, the limbs of which are filled with living men. To these fire is applied, and the whole structure being wrapped in flames, the victims perish therein. The Gauls consider that

the punishment in this manner of those who have been caught in theft or robbery or any other crime is particularly agreeable to the immortal gods. But when the supply of such victims runs short they do not hesitate to offer up innocent men." (*De Bello Gallico*, Lib. vi. § 16.)

We may put it then that pagan man, the descendant of ancestors who have survived God's terrible judgments of sin and learned the lesson that God reckons sin as worthy of death, found as his answer to this question, "How does the holy God suffer me, a sinner worthy of death, to live?" this, first of all, "God suffers me to live only on condition that I satisfy His retributive justice by offering to Him another human life instead of my own." Then, as he became more civilised, pagan man revolted from the atrocities into which this erroneous answer led him, but in flinging away the error, also flung away the truth, and, through rightly judging that God did not demand human sacrifices, wrongly concluded that God did not after all regard sin as worthy of death. The dark-souled pagans kept the truth that had been gained, but by covering it over with new error, stifled it and prevented further advance. The light-souled pagans, advancing in the wrong direction, lost connection altogether with the truth that had been gained, and fell away from the true line of religious progress.

The Jews, alone amongst ancient peoples, are found, as they gradually disentangle themselves from the paganism surrounding them, keeping a persistent hold of the truth that sin is worthy of death in the sight of God, and yet at the same time

refusing to offer human expiatory sacrifices, or something equivalent thereto, to God. The Jews alone, while continuing to regard sin as death-worthy, refused to make any attempt at actually satisfying retributive justice in their system of sacrifices. When Abraham attempts to offer his son Isaac on Mount Moriah, but the ram caught in the thicket is substituted for the human victim, then a new idea is substituted for the pagan idea of a human life for a human life. The life of a sheep is manifestly *not* the just equivalent for the life of a man, and yet it is believed by Abraham, and after him by the whole Jewish people, that the God who is recognised as regarding human sin as being worthy of human death is prepared to pardon the sinner who comes before Him expressing his penitence and faith in such an offering.

In the Jewish system then, the sacrifice made no pretence of actually satisfying divine justice, as the system of the dark-souled pagans did. It was, on the contrary, a help towards the fulfilment of the requirements of God's holy mercy. Through the shedding of blood connected with it, it helped the worshipper towards making his repentance include within it the confession that sin is worthy of death, and so avoided the error of the light-souled pagans who, taking light views of sins, offered merely flowers and fruit; while at the same time, by the enormous disparity between the life of a sheep which was actually offered and the life of the worshipper himself which justice demanded, it led the worshipper in the direction of trusting entirely to the pure mercy of God; and so avoided the error of the dark-souled pagans with their utterly im-

possible attempt to actually satisfy divine justice.

In the descendants of Abraham, therefore, God found, or rather raised up for Himself, a people who came nearer than any others to a true answer to the great question, "How does the holy God, who regards sin as worthy of death, suffer us to live?" "It is true that God is holy," said Israel. "It is true that He regards sin as worthy of death. But God is also gracious and merciful. And if I only comply with the conditions of mercy, if I truly repent and believe, then God will bless me greatly and make me a great people in whom all nations of the earth shall be blessed." It was a true answer so far as it went. It was an answer taught by the Spirit of God illuminating past experience.

But in this answer there was an "if," the full significance of which only gradually dawned on the consciousness of Israel. "*If I can only repent and believe! If I can only comply with the conditions of divine mercy!*" We may say that the real history of Israel consists in the gradual recognition of the full significance of that little "if." Israel came to the brink of what seemed to her a little rivulet easy to be crossed. And on the other side of it she beheld a fair land of spiritual promise, rich with beauty and radiant with glory. But as her history proceeded, the seeming rivulet swelled to a river, and the seeming river became a lake, and the seeming lake became what it had always been in reality, an utterly impassable ocean—and the fair land of promise was still on the further side. On behalf of all mankind Israel learned, not merely that man cannot of himself satisfy divine justice, but also the deeper truth that it is utterly and for

ever impossible for sinful man, of himself, to comply with the conditions of divine mercy—namely to come to God with a God-acceptable repentance and faith. She found her futile attempts to attain to a true repentance and to establish herself as a nation worthy to receive the blessing of a merciful God rejected again and again, and yet so much of gracious kindness was mingled with God's dealings with her, that, in the very act of learning how hopeless were her own endeavours, she, or at least some of her most spiritually-minded sons, learned to expect that what she could not do for herself, God Himself would achieve for her through a great Deliverer whom He would send to her aid.

To trace out this general conception of the history of Israel in any detail is here impossible, but a few of the more outstanding facts may be indicated. We find Israel beginning her career as a nation in a spirit of buoyant confidence. She has had wonderful tokens of the goodness and power of God in her deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. She has had, through Moses, the true character and will of God revealed to her in a very remarkable degree, and she exults in the consciousness that no other nation possesses so real and elevated a knowledge of God as herself. She feels herself set apart for a great and noble mission—to be a holy nation consecrated to a more exalted service than any other people on earth. And she is confident that she can do what she is called upon to do; that she can exhibit to the world the spectacle of a people who know Almighty God as He really is, who are capable of accomplishing His will, who, if in any-

thing they fall short or transgress, are quite sure that they can so repent as to obtain the divine pardon, and who, therefore, confidently count upon increasing and flourishing until they become the envy and the admiration of the whole earth.

We find, however, that from the very first this spirit of confidence begins to receive severe and trying shocks. During the passage from Egypt through the wilderness Israel has to endure a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Amorites, and is called upon to suffer many trials and spend many weary years in apparently aimless wanderings. The promised land is, however, reached at last, and the spirit of confidence revives. For a time that confidence seems to be justified by events. The pagan inhabitants of the land are overthrown in battle after battle, and the tribes of Israel take possession of the country. Then come new disasters. Oppressor after oppressor lords it over Israel, while on the other hand deliverer after deliverer is raised up on her behalf. At last the kingdom is established under Saul and David and Solomon, the borders of the realm are widely extended, the temple is built, an elaborate ritual is instituted, and it seems as though Israel's grand ideals are now fairly on the way to realisation. With the death of Solomon, however, comes a new and unexpected shock to the spirit of confidence. The kingdom is rent asunder and the brethren of Israel who were to set so great an example to the nations are found engaging in civil war. Now the prophets begin to make their voices more emphatically heard, and, interpreting God's dealings in history, they, too, administer frequent shocks to

the national sense of confidence, while yet in a measure they strengthen and confirm it. They warn the people that their repentances do not go deep enough, and that their obedience is not sufficiently zealous. Yet the earlier prophets betray no misgiving on the question as to whether it is possible for Israel to attain of herself to a God-acceptable repentance. On the contrary, they are quite sure that she can repent and obey, if only she tries earnestly enough. And Israel is quite of the same opinion, and does endeavour with all her might to adequately repent and zealously obey. She has her times of reformation and cleansing—times when she turns in fierce anger upon her idols and grinds them to powder—when she pays the most careful heed to all the minutiae of her ritual and floods the temple-courts with her offerings and sacrifices. And yet it is all in vain. After each successive attempt at reformation, the tide of idolatry and moral corruption sweeps back again.

In the meantime the political situation has been slowly changing. Great world-powers are seen to be looming up on different quarters of the horizon, moving to meet each other in hostile collision—and Israel lies directly in their path. Then a new note of urgency is heard from the prophets. "There is danger," they cry, "great danger to Israel. Hasten to make your repentance real. Hitherto you have been merely pretending to repent. These sacrifices of yours—these rivers of blood—are not helping you towards, but keeping you back from, a true repentance. Will you never understand that this sin of yours is worthy of death, and if you do not turn from it as though it were

death itself, then certain and dire destruction will fall upon you? A true, spiritual repentance! A repentance to be followed by a faithful obedience! That is all that your merciful God requires, but that He must have." Thus Amos cries to Northern Israel, "Though ye offer me your burnt offerings, I will not accept them. Let judgment roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."¹ And Hosea echoes the call of Amos: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."² And Micah joins in: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God."³ Then comes the mighty voice of Isaiah: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me, saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he-goats. Bring no more vain oblations. Wash you, make you clean; cease to do evil, learn to do well."⁴ It seemed so natural, so inevitable, that Israel should truly repent. There was the dark storm-cloud of doom so manifestly approaching in the form of the overwhelming might of pagan Assyria. And here were the strong, authoritative voices of the faithful men of God proclaiming the plain meaning of events in language of unmistakable clearness and power. And yet Israel could not and did not attain to a true spiritual repentance. She went on blindly in her evil ways, and with the voices of the prophets ringing in her ears, met the very doom that the

¹ Amos v. 24. ² Hos. vi. 6. ³ Mic. vi. 8.

⁴ Isa. i. 11, 16.

men of God had foretold. Northern Israel was taken possession of by Sargon, King of Assyria. Samaria, the capital, was plundered and destroyed, and the people who were left after the slaughter were carried into captivity.

And now we might surely deem that if a true spiritual repentance had been possible of attainment by man, then poor, helpless Judah, trembling and shuddering at the sight of the doom that had fallen upon her sister kingdom, must have attained it. Yet it was not so, and it was not so simply because it could not be so. The task was infinitely greater than any human strength of will or of insight was able to achieve. For somewhat over a hundred years Judah indeed was spared. For a little while, under the potent influence of Isaïah, aided by the weak but well-meaning Hezekiah, Judah did sincerely endeavour to amend her ways, and in a slight measure succeeded. But after Hezekiah came Manasseh, of whom it is written that he offered up his own son as a sacrifice to Moloch, and practised augury and used enchantments and built heathen altars in the very temple of the Lord,¹ and filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. Another brief attempt at reformation takes place under Josiah, and then, swiftly, irrevocably, like a boat drawn over a cataract, Judah plunges downward to her doom. Ten years after the death of Josiah, Nebuchadnezzar is driving the first, long, miserable line of Jewish exiles across the plains of Babylon. Ten years more, and after a siege of eighteen months, Jerusalem is taken and sacked, her temple and her palaces utterly destroyed, and

¹ 2 Kings xxi. 5.

the last despairing remnants of her people carried captive to the pagan city of exile.

Now it is quite true that in the world's history ere this time many peoples had risen to eminence and sunk into ruin, and many flourishing cities had been besieged and sacked. It is also true, however, that never before in the world's history had the fall of a people and the destruction of a city given rise to such agonised wrestlings of the spirit, such eager, strenuous endeavours to find the answer to apparently unanswerable religious problems. "Why has our merciful God dealt thus with us?" was the cry of the faithful Jews. And the grace of God had so wrought upon them in the past that they could not accept any unworthy or God-dishonouring answer. It was not that God was more on the side of the pagans than of themselves. Of that they became increasingly sure as they saw in the land of exile the life of the pagans from behind the scenes. And it was not that their knowledge of God had been mistaken. It was not that God was merciless or required of them human expiatory sacrifices. God *was* merciful, and able freely to pardon sin when He found a true repentance. But Judah had not truly repented. Here was the real secret. If only Judah, taught by these terrible disasters, would now repent in reality, then God would again be gracious to her and yet fulfil His gracious promises towards her. Such is the burden of the great prophets of the exile.

Even before the destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah had announced that the time for any such repentance as would avail to save the city was

finally past. In the presence of the elders he dashed an earthen pot to pieces, exclaiming, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city."¹ And Ezekiel, himself an exile in Babylon, does not spare his prostrate fellow-countrymen. He regards it as his duty to make Judah realise her abominations. "Thy birth and thy nativity," he cries, "is of the land of the Canaanite; the Amorite was thy father, and thy mother was a Hittite."² If words of unsparing scorn and burning indignation could ever of themselves produce a true repentance, then surely the words of Ezekiel must have done so. Yet while Ezekiel and Jeremiah both agreed that the time had gone by for any such repentance as would avail to save the city, both also seemed to expect that once Judah could measure the fervour of God's wrath against sin and the depth of her own iniquity by the terrible disaster of the captivity, then Judah would be able to accomplish what hitherto she had found impossible; then she, or rather the purified remnant of her, would be able to turn to God with an abiding and spiritual repentance. And when at last the time came for the return from the exile, we find that it was in this very expectation that the Jews set forth once more upon their career as a nation. They rose up from the dust of Babylon saying, "We have sinned indeed, but we sinned in a large measure of ignorance. We did not realise how very terrible and earnest was Jehovah's wrath against sin. We refused to listen to His prophets, and we did not set ourselves with our whole hearts to keep His law. But now, taught by these fearful judgments of God, we know better.

¹ Jer. xix 11. ² Ezek. xvi. 3.

Now we will go forward once again, and this time we will keep the law of God faithfully, and as a reward for our fidelity God will send to us the Messiah, and through Him fulfil all the glorious promises He has made to us." Yet in all this Judah was once more attempting the impossible. Strive as hard as she might, she could not keep the law of God. Afflict her soul as she might, she could not attain to an abiding and God-acceptable repentance.

And yet Judah did not set forth on this attempt unwarned of its impossibility. If she had been able to understand what was written in her own Scriptures, then she might have known that when the Messiah should come it would not be to reward her for her success in keeping God's law, but to show, once for all, that sinful man can never of himself find acceptance even with a merciful God.

It is hardly to be doubted that the high-water mark of Hebrew prophecy is found in the writings known to modern times as those of the Second Isaiah. This great prophet of the latter days of the exile has grappled with the problems that have pressed upon his soul—the greatest religious problems as yet presented to the mind of man—and he has emerged as a conqueror from the tremendous spiritual conflict. He sees Israel's fair land of promise in brighter colours, in more radiant spiritual glory, in more vivid actuality than ever, but also he sees more clearly than any of his predecessors how wide is the gulf that rolls between the beautiful vision and its actual realisation on earth. When he announces the coming deliverance from exile through the instrumentality of

Cyrus, he finds that his glad tidings is by no means warmly or universally welcomed. He has much difficulty in inducing his fellow-countrymen to accept a Gentile as their God-appointed deliverer. He has therefore to ask himself the question, "How will men so spiritually blind and deaf ever be able to carry out the great designs of God, or respond to the exacting demands of His holiness?" And as he gazes forward into the future it becomes clear to him that not all Israel will be able to act as the direct servant of the great ideals of God—not even all the remnant—only the remnant of the remnant. At last he sees only One great Person, whose outlines are left vague and shadowy, who will be able to execute the immeasurably great task which the prophet perceives waits to be accomplished.

And the mode in which the great task must be fulfilled also grows clear to the prophet's mind. It is, he sees, the mode of vicarious sacrifice—the innocent brother voluntarily suffering by and for the sin of the sinful brother. Of the value of such vicarious sacrifice he has had illustrious examples before his eyes in the cases of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. These prophets have suffered by and for the sins of their own people, and their great successor has been quick to discern the truth that these unmerited sufferings of the innocent have done far more to impress the consciences of His people with a real hatred of sin than all the external punishments that had fallen upon them. But he knows also that the innocence of Jeremiah and Ezekiel was only comparative innocence, for they were after all sinful men like himself. And he knows, too, that such

hatred of sin as has been communicated to Israel through their unmerited sufferings is still far from being a perfect hatred of sin. Accordingly, though he feels that by the illumination of past experience gained through the Holy Spirit, he has obtained the clue to God's method of solution of the great problem, yet he also recognises that the Servant of the Lord through whom the problem is to be solved must be One far removed from the level of ordinary men—One who "shall deal wisely and shall be exalted and lifted up and shall be very high"¹—One who shall be innocent—without deceit, incapable of violence, ready to be unjustly put to death and to be numbered with transgressors,² and yet enduring his lot of unmerited shame and hardship with uttermost self-repression. Through such a Servant of the Lord does Second Isaiah perceive that the solution of the great problem will be found, and the God of all holiness become able to enter upon permanently loving and friendly relations with sinful men who are unable of themselves to comply with the conditions of divine mercy.

We know now that the prophet was right, and that his forecast is one of the most wonderful things in human history. And yet we cannot be surprised that a prophecy so elevated in its spiritual insight remained so little understood by the prophet's fellow-countrymen, that when the Messiah at last came to the world, more than five hundred years later, it did not prevent them in their blindness from fulfilling it, by dooming their Messiah to the shameful death of the Cross. The Jews returned from exile to their own land to engage

¹ Isa. lii. 13. ² Isa. liii. 12.

in a new endeavour to accomplish the impossible---to attempt, by a true repentance and a faithful obedience of their own, to merit the blessing of God. In what they aimed at they utterly and ignominiously failed. *Yet in and through that futile attempt the purpose of God regarding them was effectively accomplished.* For it was the very men who had laboured in vain, by afflicting their own souls to attain to a God-acceptable repentance, who were able, when at last they stood horror-stricken before the appalling fact that they had crucified their own Messiah, to embrace and to value aright the means of attaining to a saving repentance which God had thus, of His own free grace and in His own immeasurable love, placed within their reach. Now that the full death-worthiness of sin was revealed to them they saw how utterly impossible of success had been, from the very beginning, their own poor attempts to attain to a God-acceptable hatred of sin apart from that appalling revelation and apart from the Saviour who became qualified to save through undergoing that tremendous experience. But it was just because they had made these poor attempts of their own, and miserably failed, that they were able to discern and to value aright the Saviour's work. And now that the incredible greatness and spiritual glory of the love of God was revealed to them through the Cross they saw how utterly impossible it was that their own poor attempts at righteous conduct should ever satisfy the demands of such a God, and grasped with avidity at the thought of a perfect righteousness to be found in spiritual communion with Christ. But it was

because they had made these poor and futile attempts at establishing a righteousness of their own, and had so utterly failed therein, that they were able to see and welcome the true righteousness when it was at last revealed.

To no people in the world could the Saviour have come without being despised and rejected. But in coming to the Jews He came to a people who through long centuries had been so prepared of God that after they had despised and rejected Him they were able to furnish many souls capable of reading aright the great lessons which God sought to teach; capable of appreciating and receiving with trembling gratitude the great salvation that God had wrought, and capable, therefore, of forming a human channel for conveying tidings of the truth and grace of God in Christ to all the nations of the earth. It is not to be wondered at that we read that on the day of Pentecost, when the first Christian sermon was preached, there were added to the church about three thousand souls. It was a great and marvellous harvest, but in order to produce it God had been preparing the hard and barren soil for hundreds and hundreds of years. Not in vain did Israel pass through the deep waters of bitterness and the fiery furnace of affliction. No "idle ore" was she,

But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom
To shape and use.

The debt which the world owes to Israel is excelled only by the debt due to that great, patient, overruling

God who, in His wisdom and mercy and love, fashioned her to be the effective instrument of His far-reaching and gracious designs. Without Israel, spiritually disciplined as she had been by her age-long, tragic endeavour to achieve the impossible, the Saviour, so far as man in this world is concerned, would have died in vain.

We have thus seen that the propitiatory theory of the Cross throws a stream of light upon the whole history of man before the coming of the Saviour. It finds itself corroborated by a view of human history antecedent to the Cross, which is accordant with the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and not inconsistent with any trustworthy facts accredited by modern science.

CHAPTER XVI.

CORROBORATIVE VIEW OF NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY.

DOES the propitiatory theory of the Cross find itself corroborated by the history of man after the Cross? We propose to show in this chapter that, in so far as that history is recorded in the New Testament, it does.

According to the propitiatory theory, we must recognise that there was effected through the Cross, first, a revelation of truth, and second, an acquisition of spiritual power. The truth revealed was the death-worthiness of sin, and the willingness of God to freely forgive this death-worthy sin to believers in Christ. The power acquired was the power of the Saviour to enable believers to comply with the conditions of God's holy mercy—to attain to a perfect hatred of sin, a perfect love of righteousness, and a perfect faith in the holy love of God. The acquisition of this spiritual power was the great end and object of the Cross, but it was only natural, nay it was inevitable, that the first impression made on the conscience of man by the Cross was its revelation of the death-worthiness of sin and of God's willingness to forgive. We find from the New Testament that this was indeed the case.

The apostolic message first delivered to the Jews

in Jerusalem took most naturally this simple form: "This Jesus of Nazareth, whom you crucified, was not, in reality, the impostor and blasphemer that He seemed to you to be. He was veritably the Christ of God, as is now proved by the fact, of which we are witnesses, that God raised Him from the dead." And the feeling of the Jews who believed this message was naturally this: "If this be true, how unutterably dreadful is the crime we have committed. How terrible the vengeance that God must exact! Truly our lives are forfeit! We are worthy of death! Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And the answer of the apostles was, in effect, this: "If you repent indeed, if you truly recognise at last that your sin is worthy of death, and turn from it believing that you shall receive forgiveness through the Christ whom you have thus wickedly crucified, then your lives will be saved, the vengeance of God will pass you by, and you shall be forgiven indeed. It was in order that you should be enabled thus to repent and believe that this great event has taken place. It was all foreseen and foretold, as you will find if you consult the prophets. Christ was not merely crucified *by* you, but also He was crucified *for* you. The Crucified One has become your Saviour." And since this Jewish audience knew that this message came from the lips of the accredited followers of Jesus, in whom they saw the Holy Spirit to be working mightily; since the message was corroborated by the fact that no thunderbolts of wrath fell upon them from heaven, and since, through the working of the Holy Spirit on their own souls, they were enabled to accept the risen Christ as their

Saviour, therefore they were enabled to attain to a God-acceptable faith and repentance.

But the audience on which this simple message produced such a marvellous effect was, as we have already seen, an audience which God Himself had been specially preparing throughout hundreds of years—an audience, too, which stood near in time to the historical Cross. The situation became greatly altered when the same gospel message came to be preached to Gentiles years after the crucifixion had taken place. Why should the philosophers of Athens, or the statesmen of Rome, or the common people of any Gentile country, feel that any responsibility attached to them because, years before, in a city whose name they had scarcely heard, a people called the Jews had crucified one of their prophets? Why should not merely the Roman soldier who drove his spear into the heart of the Christ, and not merely the Jews who had consented to the crucifixion, exclaiming, “His blood be on our heads,” but also the Jews who had believed in Christ, including His own apostles, and all the Gentiles in the world, why should all these men feel a new sense of guilt and shame and dread of judgment, because a band of evil-minded Jews had brought about the crucifixion of that good and holy prophet, Jesus of Nazareth? It was to meet this difficulty of the expanding gospel that the gospel message in the hands of the apostles underwent those changes which adapted it for becoming a summons to repentance and an assurance of salvation, not merely for the Jews, but for the whole world and for all ages.

The first modification of the primitive message

consisted naturally in unfolding the doctrine of the person of Christ. Jesus of Nazareth was *more* than a Jewish prophet. He had a relationship not merely to the Jews, but to all mankind. He was Son of Man—the Second Adam—and He was Son of God—that God who was the Creator of Jews and Gentiles alike. Being such a unique personality, He necessarily held relationship with every human creature. He belonged to all humanity, and all humanity belonged to Him. When He came to this world He came to a world which was by right His own. If the world had known who He really was, then the whole world should have flocked to do Him homage.

Manifestly, the Greeks and Romans and so-called barbarians who received this message as true could not possibly remain indifferent to it. But they might very easily have said, “Ah, if the Lord had only come to us, we should have treated Him very differently,” and so have prevented themselves from receiving Christ as the Saviour from their own sins. Accordingly, parallel with their development of the doctrine of the person of Christ, the apostles were led to unfold the doctrine of sin. They had to show that the men who crucified the Lord were not exceptions to the rule, but true representatives of sinful man all the world over. These men had sinned indeed, but they had sinned in a large measure of ignorance. In their case the exceeding sinfulness of their sin had been revealed, because the Saviour had offered His heart for their spears to pierce. But the sins of all men were in a sense equally heinous, although the opportunity for manifesting their full heinousness was not

granted to them. Wherever in all the world a sinful, impenitent, and unbelieving man was to be found, there was a man who was on the way to crucify the Son of God. All sin aimed in the end at what the sin of those who crucified Christ manifestly aimed—namely at the unspeakably dreadful impiety of the destruction of God Himself. All sin, therefore, was worthy of death, yet no sinful man could attain to a saving repentance apart from the Cross of Christ. To Jews and Greeks and Romans and barbarians alike, therefore, the apostles were able to say: “You think that it means nothing to you that the Son of God was crucified on Calvary. We have to tell you that it means everything. It is true that you did not with your own hands actually nail the Lord to the Cross; but in so far as you are sinners, you are partners with those who did. You know, after a fashion, that you are sinners, but you do not—you cannot know what your sin means to God and for yourselves. You think you can judge of the evil of your sin by looking to the effects which you yourselves see it producing. And you think that thus you can so repent as to obtain God’s forgiveness. But you cannot. It is a sheer impossibility. You know that you steal and defraud, that you are the victims of evil passions and lusts, that you are selfish and cruel and unjust. And you think that you can measure the guilt of these sins by summing up such of the evil consequences as are visible to your own eyes. But you cannot. If you would really measure the depth of your guilt, come with us and look upon the Cross of Christ. There and nowhere else in all the world can you learn what

your sin really means. Trace these sins of yours to their final issue, and you will see that you, too, are driving home these cruel nails into the hands and feet of the Son of God. You, too, by your sins are piercing the Saviour's side. You, too, by your sins are aiming at the destruction of the Lord of holiness and love. Judge then how your sin appears in the sight of God. Judge then the awful doom in which your sin involves you. It renders you worthy of death—death at the hands of the God of holy love. You may return, if you choose, to your chambering and wantonness, to your lives of selfishness and cruelty and fraud, but now you know what such a life means to God and what it involves for yourselves. Yet it was not for your *condemnation* that the Lord thus brought to light the full sinfulness of your sin. It was for your *salvation*. It was that you might flee from sin as from death. It was that you might attain to a God-acceptable repentance and a living faith. Accept then the one sole means given to sin-blinded men by which they may attain to a God-acceptable repentance. Flee from the wrath to come. Learn to be crucified with the Christ whom you, in your ignorance, have been crucifying. Learn to hate sin as Christ hates it, who finds it responding to His love by crucifying Him upon the Cross. Accept the gracious pardon which Christ so freely offers you. Believe in His divine commission to be your Saviour. So shall you become possessors of everlasting life." And Jews and Greeks and Romans and barbarians, because this message, though strange and wonderful, was yet essentially simple and clear, and free from the perversions

which in later times were to encumber it, were able to receive it as a veritable message from heaven. They were able to join with the apostles and say, "Yes, it is true. It was *our* sins that He bore, and not merely the sins of those who actually crucified Him. Nay, it was the sins of the whole world that He endured. And He *bore* our sins. He was not *punished* for His own sins, for He had none. And He did not bear the *punishment* of *our* sins, for He was not punished at all, but most wickedly put to death. But our very sins themselves, manifested in all their hatefulness, He bore in His own body on the tree, in order that we, looking upon them thus, might have our eyes opened and our hearts cleansed, and turn from our darkness to the saving light. And we know that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin, for it causes us to turn from our own sins with a dread and horror such as we never knew before. By this we understand that Jesus died for our sins and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world."

But the gospel message had not yet by any means assumed its final shape. So great and marvellous, indeed, was the influx of spiritual power which came to the first believers through the revelation of truth immediately disseminated by the Cross, that for a while it almost seemed as though the effects which the Cross was intended ultimately to produce had already been brought forth in perfection amongst men. For a little while it almost seemed as though a perfect hatred of sin, and a perfect love of righteousness, and a perfect faith in God had been established in the souls of men. And therefore at first no pressing need was

felt of shaping the doctrine of the Cross so as to cause it to meet the case of men who should repent and yet not perfectly repent, and who should obey and yet not perfectly obey, and who should believe and yet not perfectly believe—who should be true Christians, and yet be capable of falling into sin once more. But as time went on and Christian experience extended and deepened, it became increasingly manifest that even the Cross of Christ did not immediately produce in believing men a perfect hatred of sin or a perfect faith in God—that even the most exalted of the saints were still immeasurably far from being perfectly right with God, and needed to make ever-recurring demands on God's forgiveness. The question, therefore, began to obtrude itself: How is it that the God of all holiness, who cannot, without denying Himself, relax in the slightest the demands of His holiness, consents to receive as His own children men like us, who still, in spite of our faith in Christ, continue in a measure in sin? It cannot be that God accepts us because of any works of righteousness we have done. It cannot be that God accepts us because of the repentance which is already wrought in us by the historical Cross, for that we feel to be inadequate. Why then does God accept us at all?

It is in furnishing the answer to this question that we find the New Testament writers passing beyond the revelation of truth immediately furnished by the Cross, and pointing to the acquisition of spiritual power gained eternally by Him who endured the experience of the Cross as providing the solution required. "The Lord Jesus," they

said in effect, "has through His death on the Cross become eternally qualified to impart through the Holy Spirit to all who believe on Him a perfect human hatred of sin, a perfect human love of righteousness, and a perfect human knowledge of God. But the assimilation of these great gifts by believers requires time, and moral discipline, and spiritual aspiration. There must be a period of spiritual struggle during which the believer must fight the good fight of faith. During this time of struggle he is still imperfect, still hindered and hampered by the old sinful nature, still frequently requiring to confess his sin and implore forgiveness. Nevertheless, the holy God is able to accept him as one of His own children, because he is united by faith to a Saviour, who is now able, because he has acquired through His experience on earth a perfect human hatred of sin, and a perfect human love of righteousness, and a perfect human knowledge of God, to communicate these eternal possessions of His to all human beings who believe in Him, and thus to enable them in the end to comply to the uttermost with the conditions of divine mercy. God therefore knows that the Saviour is an all-sufficient surety for the ultimate perfection of all who trust in Him. God knows that there is not one of the Saviour's flock that will not in the end be presented before Him wholly spotless and clean. And therefore God, who sees the end of all things in their beginnings, is able even here and now to reckon as righteous every true believer in Jesus Christ. By the faith which unites him in living spiritual communion with that living Saviour who is able to supply him with

all the spiritual gifts necessary for the man who would stand before the All-holy God—by that faith is the believer—still sinful and imperfect though he be—rightly and reasonably justified in the sight of God. Such a faith necessarily involves that the believer shall be continually seeking to make his calling and election sure by applying to Christ for more and more of the indispensable gifts which Christ alone can give—for a hatred of sin which dreads sin more than death—for a love of righteousness which counts the doing of God's will the chiefest of all delights—for a spiritual knowledge of God which approaches ever nearer to complete assurance of the truth. The believer cannot continue in sin that grace may abound, because the very first gift which his faith pledges him to keep seeking from his Saviour is that perfect human hatred of sin which the Saviour alone can bestow. And yet because this faith is fixed upon a Saviour who has perfectly finished His work—that is who has equipped Himself to the very uttermost to meet the needs of blind and sinful men, and who, the longer and the better He is known, does the more fully make manifest His power to communicate to His followers all the spiritual gifts which God requires His people to possess, therefore this faith of the Christian believer brings to him in ever-increasing fulness the sense of peace with God, joy in his career of service, and the hope of perfect, everlasting life."

Such, according to the propitiatory theory, was the essential meaning of the Cross which the New Testament writers sought to convey to the world of sinful men through a rich variety of metaphor

and phrase. They spoke of the Lord Jesus as the Reconciler, the Passover sacrificed on their behalf, the great High Priest passed into the heavens, the propitiation set forth by God, the surety of the better covenant, the Mediator, the Redeemer, the vicarious Sufferer, the Sin-bearer, the Sin-cleanser, the One who buys souls with His own blood, the One who justifies by His blood, the One who sends forth the Holy Spirit, the Advocate of sinners with the Father, the Bestower of eternal life, the Deliverer from Satan's power, the Author and Finisher of saving faith, the One through whom repentance unto life is given to Israel and to the Gentiles, the only Saviour of sinful men. All these phrases are seen to be full of clear, intelligible, and pregnant meaning when interpreted in the light of the propitiatory theory of the Cross—the theory which maintains that the apostles of Christ, when they proclaimed that Christ was crucified *for* sinful men, did not forget or ignore, as the expiatory theory assumes they did, the truth which they had previously announced, that Christ was crucified *by* sinful men.

It is true that in none of these phrases or metaphors is there any perceptible effort to dwell upon or magnify the crime of those who crucified the Lord. One reason is that there was no *need* in that age for any such effort. Wherever the story was carried that the Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified in Jerusalem was the Son of God, the first instinctive feeling of every man who believed that the story was true inevitably was, "How terrible the crime which has been committed." And, as we have already seen, it was the first great interest

of the apostles to convert this feeling of horror to practical spiritual use by insisting, not that the men who crucified Jesus were exceptionally great sinners, but that their sin revealed the ultimate outcome of all sin, and so to enable their new hearers to turn from their sins also in trembling fear and shuddering horror.

Then further, there were many who found it hard to believe that the story of the Cross could be true, *for this very reason*, that it seemed to them incredible that He, upon whose person so enormous a crime had been committed, could be in reality so exalted and holy a being as Jesus was affirmed to be. With the great mass of both Jewish and Gentile peoples it was an axiom that a man dear to God's heart should be able to establish his claims by pointing to exceptional wealth or honour or power conferred upon him by the God who was supposed to love Him, and to these masses of people it seemed either sheer blasphemy or sheer absurdity to maintain in the same breath, as the apostles did, that Jesus Christ was the veritable Son of God, and *also* that He suffered death upon the Cross like a common malefactor. It is immediately apparent that in combating such unbelief the apostles would not naturally be led into emphasising the Crime of the Cross. On the contrary, it was natural for them, under such circumstances, to lay stress upon the fact that the death of the Saviour had been foreseen and foretold—that God had appointed Him to die this death—that the Sufferer was entirely sinless and His submission to the Cross purely voluntary, that the effect of His death was to save sinful men from

death and turn them to righteousness—that thus the wondrous love of God was revealed in it, and generally to bring forward every consideration which would tend to prove that Jesus, although admittedly He had suffered this great crime to be committed on His person, was yet—and just because of this very self-surrender—the veritable Son of God and Saviour of men.

To suppose that in advancing these arguments the apostles forgot or denied the truth they had previously affirmed—that the Christ had been crucified at the hands of wicked men who committed an unspeakably great crime in crucifying Him, to suppose that they meant to imply that Jesus was a man suffering from the active wrath of God, under the moral condemnation of God, is just to suppose that the apostles played into their enemies' hands and admitted the truth of the very objection which their enemies raised. It was the contention, not of the *apostles*, but of their *adversaries*, that this man who suffered the fate of a common malefactor must necessarily, in undergoing such suffering, have been experiencing the wrath of God.

The apostles never said or dreamed of saying that Christ was condemned of *God*, or endured the wrath of *God*. Twice the apostle Paul, in boldly carrying the war into the enemies' country, used language which has seemed to many to imply this. He spoke of Jesus as "having become a curse" and "being made sin." These expressions are found in letters addressed to Christian believers, but there can be little doubt that their form was first shaped in controversy with unbelievers. Paul,

of himself, would never have dreamed of attaching such words as "curse" and "sin" to the person of his blessed and holy Lord. But he found other people attaching these words to Him. He found Jews, for example, as he went about in their synagogues preaching Christ, calling his attention to the passage in Deut. xxi. 23, "If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and thou hang him upon a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon a tree, but thou shall surely bury him the same day, for he that is hanged is accursed of God; that thou defile not thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." We can easily understand the argument which Jewish prejudice would found on such a passage as this. "According to the law, all persons hanged on a tree are accursed of God. Jesus of Nazareth was hanged on a tree, therefore He must have committed a sin worthy of death and been accursed of God." How would Paul answer such an objection? We see him actually answering it in Gal. iii. 10-15. First he calls attention to the fact that there is *another* curse to be found by careful searchers into the Jewish law, namely the curse denounced upon every man who fails to comply with all its commandments (Deut. xxvii. 26)—a curse which the law itself says no Jew can possibly escape, for while on the one hand it affirms, "The man that doeth them (the commandments of the law) shall live in them,"¹ it also says on the other hand, "The righteous shall live by faith."² "From this curse of the law," Paul continues, "from this utterly hopeless endeavour to achieve the impossible, the Christ who hung upon the tree has re-

¹ Lev. xviii. 6. ² Hab. ii. 4.

deemed us. Yes, He did hang upon a tree, but he had committed no sin worthy of death. He became a curse in being crucified by wicked men, and God suffered it when He might have prevented it. But He was not accursed *of God*. That I expressly refrain from admitting, for it would be utterly untrue. He endured these sufferings and humiliations at the hands of wicked men, and He endured them by God's appointment—but He endured them for the sake of the sinful men who crucified Him, that they, Jews and Gentiles alike, might truly repent and believe, and might possess a fully qualified Saviour through whom their imperfect repentance and faith should become acceptable with God—a Saviour who, by sending forth the Holy Spirit upon believers, is able to make practically effective the righteousness which is by faith—the righteousness of Abraham—the righteousness which neither Abraham nor his people could of themselves render practically effective.”

Similarly, when we consider the parallel passage in 2 Cor. v. 21, “Him who knew no sin, He made to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” We must recognise that here again the form in which the truth is stated is governed by the exigencies of evangelistic appeal, in conflict with the common prejudices of prevalent unbelief. Although he is writing to Christians, Paul here definitely adopts the attitude of the evangelist addressing an audience of doubters or unbelievers. He is, as an ambassador of Christ, beseeching his hearers to be reconciled to God. He knows the nature of the

difficulties by which their minds are beset, and he boldly takes the word out of his adversaries' mouths and turns it against themselves. "Many people imagine," he says in effect, "that because Jesus suffered the death of a common malefactor, therefore He could not have been a man of God. They actually think He must have been a sinner Himself. O fools and blind! Can they not see that it was *on our behalf* that He suffered thus? He knew no sin, and therefore God could not possibly regard Him as a sinner. But, on our behalf, God made Him to be Sin, that is, God delivered Him into the hands of us blind and wicked men who treated Him, as you all know we did, as though He were a sinner, in order that thus our eyes might be opened to the depth of our own wickedness, that we might realise the death-worthiness of our sin, that we might be spiritually crucified with Christ, and so, turning to God with a God-acceptable repentance and faith, might become the righteousness of God in Him." The very boldness with which Paul here ventures to leave entirely unmentioned the wicked human agency by which the death of Jesus was historically accomplished only serves to show how confidently he could rely upon his hearers to supply that which he left unexpressed. As a matter of fact, the sense of the horror of sin produced by the recognition of the appalling Crime of the Cross so profoundly impressed itself upon the human conscience that, for a full thousand years after the crucifixion, it prevented any explanation of the Cross which ignored that sinful human agency from gaining acceptance in the Christian Church; and when, in

the seventeenth century, the affirmation was at last plainly made that Christ had really endured the wrath of God, that affirmation was immediately branded as an "unheard of heresy."

One further adjustment by the apostles of the gospel message still remains to be taken account of. "If all this be true," a pious Jew might say, "if He whom we so blindly and wickedly crucified was indeed our Messiah, what then of our own religion? Was it all a huge error? What was the meaning of these long centuries filled with the endeavour to worship and serve God according to our law?" "First of all," said the apostles in reply, "our own Scriptures plainly testify that the Christ must needs suffer these things. Our own prophets foresaw that it must be so, although, till after the event, we were all blind to their teachings. *The Scriptures of the Jews therefore witness to the truth of Christ.*

Then secondly, it was good for our people to make the vain attempt they did to find permanent acceptance with God without the help of a Saviour, even though that attempt has ended in such an appalling failure, because now they are in a position to know their own helplessness and their absolute need of a Saviour. On behalf of the whole world we have learned four great truths: first, that man can never of himself find acceptance with God by a perfect obedience to God's law of righteousness; second, that man can never find acceptance with God by attaining of himself to a perfect repentance; third, that it is an utter mistake to think, as most of us in these latter days had come to do, that God requires of us a perfect obedience in order

to accept us; and fourth, that it is entirely true, as our prophets told us, that God does require that we should attain to a God-acceptable repentance and faith, and yet that we cannot attain to these spiritual treasures of ourselves. We have, therefore, through this long-continued effort, ending in total failure on our part, *been most wonderfully prepared by God to welcome these treasures when they are offered to us as a free gift in Jesus Christ, and to proclaim to all the world that whosoever will may participate therein.*

Then thirdly, when we have become united to Christ, we find that that very righteousness which our law set us seeking after, but could not enable us to attain, becomes actually ours. The law urged us from without and failed, but Christian faith and love born of the Holy Spirit urge us from within, and do not fail. We find ourselves hating sin with a new and potent horror, and loving righteousness with a strangely sweet and strong devotion, and growing in spiritual knowledge, so that the eternal and spiritual world is every whit as real to us as the material world. We find ourselves plainly on the way towards a perfect obedience. We are sure that He who has begun this good work within us is able to carry it on to its final end, and we know that in the meantime God is able to reckon us as righteous in His sight because of our union with Christ. *Hence we know that it is the very end which our Jewish law sought to gain, but could not, which is being successfully attained through our fellowship with Christ.*

Then lastly, although our Jewish religion could not possibly bring us into permanent reconciliation

with God, yet it made acknowledgment, in its ritual of sacrifice, that reconciliation was required, and in that ritual we find clear foreshadowings of the Saviour who was to come. Through its sacrifices of blood, offered by the priests and accepted of God, it feebly uttered the same great truths—the death-worthiness of sin and the willingness of God to forgive—which were at last declared in such different and wondrous fashion by the un-avenged blood of the crucified Christ. *The altar, the veil, the Holy of Holies, the mercy-seat—the High Priest—all were faint and ineffectual foreshadowings of the Eternal High Priest, the God-appointed propitiation, even Jesus Christ the Crucified*, through whom there flows forth upon us continually, without loss of holiness, the abounding tender mercy of God.

By such expressions of essentially simple and intelligible truth the writers of the New Testament, especially Paul and the author of Hebrews, sought to show that although Judaism had ended in total and appalling failure so far as any conscious purpose on the part of the Jews was concerned, yet, in and through Judaism, a great and indispensable work of preparation for the coming of the Saviour had, under the overruling providence of God, been successfully accomplished. But it ought to be manifest that the advantages gained for the Christian cause through Judaism were, in the eyes of the apostles, the advantages which come *from recognised and acknowledged failure*. No Jew could possibly see the gains which the apostles saw had been won through Judaism, who did not accept the fundamental position of the apostles,

that the Jews, in crucifying their own Messiah, had been guilty of an awful and appalling defiance of God. It was the crushing fact that the age-long effort of Judaism to attain to a God-acceptable repentance had ended in this terrible *crime*, which rendered it so absolutely certain that man could never of himself attain to a God-acceptable repentance. To suppose then, as the expiatory theory supposes, that in setting forth the gains won for Christianity by Judaism, the apostles shut their eyes to the great crime in which Judaism ended, is in reality to cut away the ground from their whole contention. To suppose that when the apostles said "propitiation" they really meant "expiation"—to suppose that when they set forth Christ as "the One through whose unjustly inflicted death the death-worthiness of sin was revealed," they really meant "the One who actually suffered a sinner's death at the hands of divinely appointed executioners"—is just, in effect, to suppose that the apostles regarded the attempt of Judaism as ending, not in tragic failure, but in brilliant success, and to set for us the insoluble problem of inquiring why the apostles should think it necessary to labour as they did to show that, through Judaism, real gains had been won for the Christian cause, when, according to this hypothesis, Judaism was never more happily inspired, and was never more fully in accord with the ideal will of God than when in its blindness and sinfulness it crucified its own Messiah. Paul tells us that if the rulers of this world had known the wisdom of God they would *not* have crucified the Lord of Glory.¹ The expiatory theory, when it maintains that Jesus actually suffered and had to

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 8.

suffer the sinner's death, in order that the justice of God might be satisfied, maintains the exact opposite of Paul's assertion.

It is neither wise nor profitable to assume that the writers of the New Testament, in adjusting the great message of the gospel to the varying necessities which successively confronted them, forgot, ignored, or denied the great truth with which they began, namely that the crucifixion of Jesus was a great and terrible crime. The expiatory theory of the Cross has been guilty of this un-wisdom, and as a consequence all the great words of the New Testament referring to the saving work of Christ have become saturated with and therefore blurred and dimmed by erroneous conceptions drawn from the expiatory theory. Mere human reasoning by itself cannot cleanse these words or make them shine with their clear original significance. But what human reasoning by itself cannot do the Scriptures can. The Scriptures themselves supply the potent chemical—the searching acid which, being applied to the obscured text, resolves into nothingness all the accretions and incrustations of human error, and enables the ancient words to appear with all their pristine sharpness of outline and pregnancy of meaning. The Scriptures assert unfalteringly the great truth of the Crime of the Cross. They bear eloquent testimony to the profound sense of the horror of sin produced by the recognition of that truth. And now, wherever in the New Testament writings we supply this sense of the horror of sin produced by the recognition of this truth, there we find the fictions and contradictions of the expiatory theory immediately fading

out of sight; and the inspired writers are all seen to join in proclaiming, under many various aspects, the same great simple, intelligible, solemn, glorious truth—the truth that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the Cross by and for the sins of men, in order that to blind and sinful men there might be revealed the death-worthiness of sin and the willingness of God to forgive the believer, and in order that, on behalf of weak and dying men, the Saviour Himself might become fully qualified to enable all who repented through the Cross and believed on His name to comply with the conditions of divine holy mercy—namely to attain to a perfect hatred of sin, a perfect love of righteousness, and a perfect faith in the holy love of God, and so, not by an unreal transference of merit, but by a real transmission of spiritual love and hatred, and truth and power, to attain to a perfect obedience and become perfectly fitted for the pure and holy and eternal life of God's ideal human heaven.

And this clear, earnest, intelligible message of grace is seen to go hand in hand with an equally clear and earnest and intelligible message of judgment. Believers are not to be forgiven because retributive justice is satisfied. They are to be forgiven because holy mercy is satisfied. Retributive justice still remains unsatisfied—nay, rather it is more eager than ever to bring doom upon all who still persist in finding pleasure in that sin which is now manifested to all the world as the unspeakably abominable and impious thing that it is. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.”¹ “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands

¹ Rom. i, 18.

of the living God.”¹ “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation.”²

Such were the warnings of impending judgment with which the apostles accompanied their message of grace. Such are the warnings for which the propitiatory theory finds ample room and ground. But no such warnings can come with any force from the expiatory theory of the Cross. For according to that theory justice is satisfied—wrath is appeased—there is no vengeance to be dreaded. Why then should any man flee from the wrath to come? Had the apostles thrown themselves upon the dark world of heathenism with any such halting and self-cancelling message as this, there would have been few triumphs won for the Christian cause.

¹ Heb. x. 31. ² Heb. ii. 3.

CHAPTER XVII.

CORROBORATIVE VIEW OF LATER CHRISTIAN HISTORY.

DOES the propitiatory theory find itself corroborated by the history of man after the time of the apostles? We propose to show in this chapter that in so far as that history is recorded in the annals of the Christian Church it does.

The Son of God had come to earth in human form, had finished the work for which He came, and ascended to heaven. The long, almost rectilinear curve of human history had been impinged upon by the sharp elliptical orbit of the Son of God descending from and reascending to the Father. The story of what had taken place and its significance for the human race had been faithfully recorded for all time in the writings of the New Testament.

Now if we are to understand the history which followed we must be able to answer the question—Why was it expedient that the risen Lord should vanish out of the sight of men? To the ordinary Christian at the first sight it seems as though it must have been immeasurably more expedient that He should remain on earth in all the visible glory of His immortal humanity, to dissipate unbelief, to overawe iniquity, to enable faith and love and

righteousness to flourish under the shelter of His manifested presence. The answer given by the propitiatory theory to this question is that God must hold to the same great aim which He had kept in view all along, namely to acquire a true spiritual sovereignty of love and holiness over sinful and rebellious man. That aim could not have been furthered by the enforced submission to the authority of Christ which would have been imposed upon all men had the risen Lord remained on earth visible to human eyes. It was expedient that the Christ, as the visible, immortal King of Glory, should go away in order that He might come again in and through the invisible Holy Spirit, who should take of the things of Christ and show them to men, not by way of force or of overwhelming demonstration to the senses—not in such a way that men could not, if they chose, quench the Spirit; but by reasonable and spiritual persuasion, so that those who did accept the salvation offered in Christ might do so of their own free and deliberate choice.

Hence we find that just as man had to learn by hard and bitter experience, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, that God regards sin as worthy of death, that man cannot of himself satisfy God's retributive justice, nor yet comply with the conditions of divine mercy, so also was it necessary that man should learn by glad and joyful experience, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, that what he cannot do for himself God is able and willing to do for him through the God-appointed and fully qualified Saviour, who communicates His spiritual treasures

from heaven through the Holy Spirit. An examination of the history of the Christian Church since the time of the apostles reveals that this is the essential thing which the Christian Church has been doing all through the centuries—learning by joyful experience that she possesses a real Saviour in heaven who is capable, through the Holy Spirit, of enabling her to comply with the conditions of divine mercy and find acceptance with God, capable of endowing her with a hatred of sin, and a love of righteousness, and an assured faith or spiritual knowledge which, through never attaining to perfection, yet, because of the source whence they spring, have within themselves the guarantee of attaining to perfection, and so resulting in a life of perfect obedience.

This is what the Christian Church has been doing in reality. This is not, however, what the Christian Church has always thought or said she has been doing. Her own account of her own experience has never been an entirely accurate representation of her real experience. She has always on the whole believed that the account she was giving of her experience was in full harmony with the Scriptures and with the teachings of the Spirit, yet it was simply impossible that this should be so in reality. For when the members of the Apostolic Church had all passed away from earth, when the first audience of the gospel which had been specially prepared by God for the reception of the truth had disappeared from human sight and knowledge, then the task of interpreting the gospel devolved upon men who had but newly

emerged from the darkness of paganism, and while the experience of these men was truly Christian experience, yet was it inevitable that in giving their account of that experience they, being left in possession of true freedom, though themselves but dimly aware of the fact, should introduce many entirely erroneous conceptions which they had brought over with them from paganism. No doubt there were correctives for these errors in the Scriptures. No doubt the Spirit of truth protested in the deep recesses of the soul against these errors. But it required long periods of time for these corrective processes to do their purifying work. The spiritual leaven was in the end to leaven the whole mass of humanity, but in order that this should be so, it was needful first of all that it should be deeply hid in the heart of the great unleavened mass—so deeply hid that to the undiscerning eye it might easily seem to have disappeared entirely. Jews, Greeks, Romans, Gauls, Teutons, and Celts came one after another under the influence of the gospel, and, in spite of all differences of training and heredity and environment, for all of them their new spiritual experience was essentially the same—the experience of salvation—the experience of finding the heart being cleansed from sin and becoming encouraged to hope for a glorious eternal life made possible through the Saviour.

But the accounts given by these different intellects of this common spiritual experience were varied and often discordant. In the Western Church, however, in spite of protests from some individuals such as Gregory Nazianzen, and in

spite of other contradictory conceptions being simultaneously entertained, the thought of Christian theologians tended at length to rest in the theory that the great cause of their spiritual experience was that through the death of Christ a ransom had been paid to Satan which had enabled God to let His mercy flow forth towards them. And until the time of Anselm, that is until more than a thousand years of the Church's history had elapsed, the Church upon the whole continued to rest satisfied with this explanation of her experience of the mercy of God in Christ. Then, with the publication of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*, an extraordinary revolution of thought occurred. Like an iceberg inverting itself in the sea, so, completely and absolutely, did the thought of the Church with regard to the meaning of the Cross turn apparently upside down. Whereas up to this time it had been the generally accepted idea of the Church's greatest theologians that the death of Christ had been a ransom paid to the devil, now, from this time onward, all the Church's greatest theologians are found affirming that the death of Christ was a debt paid to the honour or a satisfaction rendered to the retributive justice of God. The expiatory theory—a theory, on the surface, utterly contradictory of the Satanic-ransom theory, completely ousted its predecessor, and up till the present day has, though amid a rising flood of protests, continued practically to hold the field.

It is very manifest then that the propitiatory theory does not find itself confirmed by the earlier theories of the Cross in the sense that there is any

formal or external agreement between it and them. So far as reasoned statement of the truth is concerned, the propitiatory theory stands equally opposed to both. But whereas the expiatory theory finds in the Satanic-ransom theory a rival whose long-continued reign in the Church deprives it of one-half of the prestige and weight of authority to which it considers itself entitled—a rival, too, for whose existence it cannot account—the propitiatory theory on the other hand, while rejecting with equal disapproval the letter of both theories, finds itself with equal friendliness embracing the underlying spirit of both. The propitiatory theory claims to express, not what the Church actually said in the past, but what the Church was trying to say. In this sense it finds confirmation for itself in the whole past history of the Church. It finds as much corroboration for itself in the thousand years before Anselm as in the eight hundred years after him.

To look merely at the surface of the Satanic-ransom theory is to see in it either a shocking and God-dishonouring falsity or else a quaint, grotesque theological curiosity. Thus Dr. Crawford writes: "It was a favourite saying with some of the Fathers that the human nature of Christ was the bait which allured the devil, while the divine nature concealed under it was the hook by which he was caught. The gross absurdity and impiety of such a notion may well be regarded by us as a warning against the too minute interpretation of scriptural metaphors."¹ And Mr. Scott Lidgett ends his valuable account of the Satanic-ransom

¹ *The Atonement*, p. 60.

theory with these words: "When the season was ripe, Anselm's epoch-making treatise, *Cur Deus Homo*, consigned it to the limbo of impossible theological curiosities."¹ Now it is very true that the Satanic-ransom theory can thus be described as being both absurd and impious. But to describe it thus, and so leave the matter without further explanation, is surely very cavalier treatment for a theory which held the allegiance of the Church for so many centuries, and which could claim amongst its supporters such great and honoured names as those of Irenæus, Origen, Augustine, and Bernard. The theory is no doubt in our eyes absurd and impious in its statement of the truth, and yet the remarkable fact is that these men of undoubted Christian character—men certainly not inferior in intellect or piety to those who followed them, sincerely held to this theory in spite of its absurdity and impiety. Surely some very powerful cause must have been in operation to prevent these earnest and spiritually discerning believers in Christ from seeing the absurdity and impiety of their theory. And what cause can be imagined strong enough to produce such an effect other than the genuine scriptural truth which underlay their utterly impossible theory? And what scriptural truth can be conceived of as underlying the Satanic-ransom theory and shaping its form other than the truth ignored by the expiatory and asserted by the propitiatory theory—the truth of the Crime of the Cross—the truth that the men who crucified the Lord were men acting under the impulse and inspiration of Satan rather than men

¹ *Spiritual Principle of the Atonement*, p 448.

acting under the impulse and inspiration of God—the truth that the death-worthiness of sin is revealed on the Cross, not through a satisfaction of divine retributive justice, but through an unparalleled manifestation of the guiltiness and God-contrariness of sin furnished by the Christ of God bearing on the Cross the uttermost worst that sin could do?

That this was indeed the case is fully borne out by the explanation commonly given by the Fathers of the manner in which Satan lost the just right which he was assumed to possess over men. He did so, they asserted, by the *injustice* of his action in procuring the crucifixion of the sinless Christ. In so doing he out-Sataned Satan. He went so immeasurably far *beyond* his just rights that therefore he forfeited *all* his rights over man. As Mr. Scott Lidgett, describing the theory of Augustine, puts it, "The devil therefore was conquered because, while he found in Christ nothing worthy of death, yet he slew Him all the same. Hence it was just that the debtors whom the devil held fast should be released by believing in Him whom the devil slew without any debt."¹ And again, "The wrath of God has laid men open to the dominion of the devil; but the moment that wrath is laid aside—and it is laid aside, according to Augustine, not on account of an atoning satisfaction, but by a movement of the divine compassion—then the dominion of the devil loses its essential ground, and the consequence is the

¹ *Spiritual Principle of the Atonement*, p. 437.

redemptive transaction through the death of Christ, which rids man of the devil's tyranny, without disregard on God's part of the devil's acquired rights."¹ Here then, struggling vainly for clear utterance under the dualism which represents the devil as a second and evil god, with whom the good God must conduct negotiations, or whom He uses as the executor of His justice, and under the fatalism which represents man as the mere puppet of either the good God or the evil god, we find unmistakable evidence of a feeling that the crucifixion of Christ was a great and transcendent crime, and that somehow the deliverance of man from sin must be interpreted in harmony with this truth. The interpretation actually given was, from the point of view of a later day, when the Church had moved away from under the shadow of dualism and fatalism, an utter theological failure. But for its own day, when nowhere on earth was there any superior light to expose its falsities, when indeed its very errors, being drawn from the pagan element surrounding the Church, were rather a recommendation in the eyes of the pagan world than otherwise, it proved in actual experience a practically sufficient explanation of the Cross. However erroneous in its details, it still represented Christ as doing for man something which man could not do for himself—doing it at the cost of His life, and securing as the result, forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God.

And the inner feeling which underlay and determined the form of the interpretation was a true feeling. It was a real and Scriptural truth that the

¹ *Spiritual Principle of the Atonement*, p. 439.

crucifixion of Jesus Christ was, on the side of the human agents, a great and transcendent crime, and it was entirely true that the interpretation of man's deliverance from sin through the Cross must take this Scriptural truth into account. Accordingly when Anselm, laying aside Augustine's dualism, but intensifying his fatalism, rightly described the death of Christ as answering to a necessity in God, but wrongly, in so doing, ignored the Crime of the Cross, he laid himself and those who followed him in declaring that the death of Christ constituted a reparation to God's honour, or a satisfaction to God's retributive justice, open to a crushing retort from Augustine and the other Fathers who held by the Satanic-ransom theory. "We indeed," the Fathers might say if they were able to address the adherents of the expiatory theory to-day, "were, in the pagan darkness by which we were surrounded, guilty of setting forth an interpretation of the Cross which you rightly describe as, and which we now fully acknowledge to have been, both absurd and impious. But at least we were never guilty of the equal absurdity and impiety of supposing that God's injured honour was repaired, or God's retributive justice satisfied by an appalling crime—or by the Son of God submitting to have this appalling crime committed on His sacred person. If *our* interpretation of the Cross deserves to be 'consigned to the limbo of impossible theological curiosities,' so also and equally does *yours*. Just as surely as the day came when you looked back in wonder at *us* and marvelled how we could ever

have given our adhesion to the Satanic-ransom theory with all the absurdity and moral contradiction which it involved, so surely will the day come when Christian men will look back at *you* and wonder how, with all your undoubted piety and learning and spiritual discernment, *you* could ever have given your adhesion to the expiatory theory with all that it involves of absurdity and moral contradiction."

And further, the Fathers might continue: "You are not to forget that it was the sense of the sinfulness of sin produced by *our* view of the Cross which enabled you to make the great advance which you really did make in yours. For it was the ever-growing sense of the sinfulness of sin, produced by our dim and blurred recognition of the Crime of the Cross, which, being transmitted to you, enabled you at last to see that sin is so entirely contrary to God that God cannot possibly bargain or make terms with Satan, the lord of sin, or acknowledge that he possesses any just rights whatsoever. Therefore it was really to the truth underlying our Satanic-ransom theory that you owed your deliverance from our dualism, and came to see, as we could not see, that God is sovereign Lord of all, without any rival evil god to dispute His authority."

Thus then the expiatory theory is in no position to dismiss the Satanic-ransom theory with contempt. So far as reasoned, intelligible statement of the truth is concerned, the one is just as involved in absurdity and moral contradictions as the other, while but for the real spiritual work done by the truth underlying the Satanic-ransom theory in saturating the con-

science of the Church with a sense of the sinfulness of sin, the expiatory theory itself could never have come into effective being.

On the other hand, it is equally impossible to banish the expiatory theory with contempt on account of the absurdities and moral contradictions involved in its intellectual statement of the truth. The absurdities and moral contradictions are there—plain and palpable—once seen, not to be ignored, or disguised or forgotten—God's justice satisfied by the most dreadful of crimes—God's honour repaired through the most impious of defiances. Nevertheless, here, as in connection with the Satanic-ransom theory, the problem arises: How could so many great and illustrious Christian believers possibly remain blind to these so evident absurdities and contradictions? And here, as before, the only possible cause that can be assigned for so great and long-lasting an effect is the existence of vital, all-important, scriptural truth concealed beneath the impossible statement of the truth.

And here, the only possible Scriptural truth which can be pointed to as underlying the expiatory theory and secretly shaping its form is the God-ward side of the truth asserted by the propitiatory theory—the truth of God's wonderful love manifested *in this particular way*—in the way of providing for sinful man a means of receiving divine forgiveness by delivering up, in obedience to a necessity in the divine nature which prevented forgiveness from being attainable in any other way, His only-begotten Son to the terrible death of the Cross.

It was simply impossible that at the time the Satanic-ransom theory was ready to die—the time of Bernard, Abelard, and Anselm—the Christian thinkers of the period should be able to conceive aright that necessity in the divine nature which indissolubly connected the death of Christ with the forgiveness of sins. If they were delivered from the dualism of the early Fathers through the perception that Satan can possess no just rights which God must recognise, they were, on that very account, exposed to a more overwhelming invasion of fatalism than ever. When the second and evil god had vanished from their minds, and the one true God was discerned as reigning supreme without a rival—though not without the opposition of a Satan devoid of just rights—then it became for a time less than ever possible to conceive of this Almighty and Sovereign Will leaving room for real human moral freedom, or to disentangle the thought of the spiritually free, personal God from the thought of the settled order of things through which and above which He wrought. The historical method of interpreting Scripture and experience was still many centuries distant, and until the arrival of that method it was simply not possible for the mind of man to conceive aright the conditions under which God must work out the salvation of sinful men. Nevertheless loyalty to the Scriptures, which most clearly indicated that Christ by His death had effected “something” absolutely necessary for the remission of sins, and loyalty also to inner spiritual experience, which felt, deep down in its depths, that there was in the Cross, “somehow,”

a shelter from the intolerable purity of the divine holiness, compelled the thinkers of the Church, once the necessity defined by the Satanic-ransom theory had ceased to be credible, to affirm that there was another necessity which prevented God's forgiveness from reaching sinful man in any other way than through the crucified Christ.

Being thus impelled to point to *some* necessity to which the death of Christ was the fitting response, being at the same time unable to define the *true* necessity, it inevitably happened that the Christian thinkers of the Middle Ages were driven to speak of the saving work of Christ on the Cross as a kind of heavenly transaction between the Father and the Son by means of which divine mercy was made available for man. At first the nature of this transaction remained in their descriptions very vague. In Anselm's account, for example, Christ's death is never described as the endurance of penalty. The truth of the Crime of the Cross had not then sufficiently faded out of sight to permit him to do so. But as Christian thought, by irresistible inward impulse, continued to play upon the hypothesis and sought to give it additional vividness and intelligibility, as the power of fatalism increased until the theological recognition of human moral freedom had almost entirely disappeared, as the shock of horror caused by the Crime of the Cross died more completely away, so did the supposed heavenly transaction between the Father and the Son become ever more and more definite until it became a nicely adjusted balancing of accounts by which the Son undertook to pay and the Father to receive from Him the full penalty for all the sins of men.

Now to look at this whole movement of thought from the outside and to fail to look beneath the surface, is to be impressed with its artificiality and unreality. It could not be otherwise. It was an attempt to show how Christ by His death had bridged over a gulf which never existed. God never needed that His retributive justice should be satisfied as a preliminary condition of the forgiveness of sins. It was a different necessity altogether in the divine nature to which the death of Christ was a response. Consequently, from the very first, the expounders of the expiatory theory had embarked upon a hopeless task. It was utterly impossible that they should ever succeed in showing any logical connection between what Christ, through His death, was supposed to have done, and the results which He was known to have achieved. And consequently there is probably no more mind-exhausting reading in the world to-day than the literature in which are embodied the attempts of expiatory-theory theologians to achieve the impossible. They all end alike in a thin and airy region of unreality—as unlike as possible to the atmosphere of the New Testament—in a region where the mind of man gasps in vain for a breath of intelligibility.

Nevertheless, since, all the while, there *was* a real necessity in the nature of God to which the death of Christ was the only possible response; since the love of God for sinful man could not be adequately set forth save by showing it as meeting this necessity through the death of Christ; since it was a far more serious error to say that there was no necessity at all, than to give an erroneous account of the

necessity, inasmuch as the real Saviourhood of Christ and the authority of the Scriptures were indissolubly connected with the maintenance of *some* necessity; therefore it must be fully and amply recognised that the expiatory theory, with all its defects, was, through many centuries, the true and effective guardian of the Christian gospel. In the earlier portion of its reign these very defects were little hindrance to it for, arising as they did from the prevailing tendencies of the age, they were recommendations rather than otherwise to the men of the age. But as the underlying truth which the expiatory theory sheltered and guarded—the truth that God so loved sinful men that, since it was necessary for their salvation, He gave up His Son to death on their behalf—as this truth took increasing possession of the souls of men, so also did it gradually produce convictions which were certain in the end to burst asunder the very theory which fostered them. For gradually it became evident to many minds that God was so truly the Father of men and His love so unutterably gracious and spiritual, that God's forgiveness could not possibly be the cramped, legal, unspiritual thing which the expiatory theory, in spite of all its well-meant efforts to the contrary, could not help describing it as being. Hence arose the remarkable movement of our modern times—the attack and defence, within the Church, of the expiatory theory—the attack of Bushnell, Maurice, and McLeod Campbell—the defence of Dale and Crawford and Denney. The result was a drawn battle. If the assailants were strong in showing that the necessity for the Cross alleged by

the expiatory theory could not be the true necessity, they were, on the other hand, weak in that they failed to show that there was any true necessity for the Cross at all. If the defenders again were weak, as they assuredly were, in repelling the direct assaults on the necessity alleged by the expiatory theory, they were strong in being able to parry the attack by proving conclusively that unless some true necessity could be shown for the Cross, then the real Saviourhood of Christ and the authority of the Scriptures must be completely surrendered.

Mr. Scott Lidgett in his *Spiritual Principle of the Atonement* reveals himself as having accurately read many of the lessons taught by this conflict. He declines to describe the death of Christ as a satisfaction rendered to the *retributive* justice of God, but his positive attempt to describe it as a satisfaction to something in the Father's nature which is neither retributive justice nor yet holy mercy, really amounts to saying once more that the satisfaction is unintelligible to the mind of man. "The surrender of the life," he says, "under, in, and through penal conditions, its acceptance by God, these are the vital elements in the matter. The perfect union with and surrender to the Father, the fulfilment of all righteousness—all this in, under, and through the penal consequences of sin—it is this positive, active, and spiritual sacrifice which annuls sin."¹ Here is the old ignoring of the Crime of the Cross and of the holy resentment of Jesus underlying His patience. Here is the old failure to observe that it is only for sinful beings that there are any "penal conditions," and that to speak of "penal conditions" in con-

¹ *Spiritual Principle of the Atonement*, p. 272.

nection with the Sinless Man is to speak of an utter unreality. The Sinless Man lived and died in our prison-world—He died at the hands of wicked men of whom it may truthfully be said that *their* blindness and malice were, in part, at least, caused by their living “under penal conditions,” but He Himself was never a prisoner, nor was His experience the experience of a prisoner. He was “in Heaven” all the while. He never gives us the slightest real reason to suppose that, in suffering as He did at the hands of wicked men, He regarded Himself as submitting to what Mr. Scott Lidgett says He did, namely “the manifestation of the wrath of God against sin.”¹ Mr. Scott Lidgett has rendered the veil of the expiatory theory thinner and more transparent than any of his predecessors, but the veil is still there. There is no possible halting-place, no half-way house between retributive justice and holy mercy. If the necessity of the Cross is to be intelligible to the mind of man, and if that necessity is not to be found in a satisfaction of retributive justice, then it must be found in a fulfilment of the conditions of holy mercy.

And now, looking backward over the whole period of Church history which stretches between our modern times and those of the apostles, we may describe broadly what has happened in the following terms: All through the centuries, we may say, the experience of the Church has been Christian experience. All through, the true leaven of the gospel has been at work. All through, the heart of the Church has been a Christian heart. But there was one great and long-lasting stage of this history

¹ *Spiritual Principle of the Atonement*, p. 272.

down to the time of Anselm, when the Christian heart was allied with and expressed its spiritual experiences through a *Christian-pagan* intellect, which sadly distorted the truth of the Scriptures, and in the case of the doctrine of the Cross, produced the Satanic-ransom theory. This theory in itself is utterly untenable, but nevertheless, underneath its mistaken form, lay concealed the man-ward side of the true explanation. It showed the heart and conscience of the Church emphasising the scriptural truth that Christ was crucified by wicked men, and dimly recognising, through a dense dark mist of confusion, that the crucifixion of the Christ by wicked men was the crowning crime of the world and the supreme manifestation of the God-contrariness and guiltiness of sin.

Then followed a second great and long-lasting stage, from the time of Anselm down to the present day, during which the Christian heart was allied with and expressed its spiritual experiences through a *Christian-Jewish* intellect, which also distorted the truth of the Scriptures, and in the case of the doctrine of the Cross, produced the expiatory theory. This theory, in itself, is utterly untenable, but nevertheless, underneath its mistaken form, lay concealed the God-ward side of the true explanation. It showed the heart and conscience of the Church emphasising the scriptural truth that Christ was crucified *for* sinful men, and dimly recognising, through mists of confusion, that here was the crowning manifestation of the love of God for man, in that God, in view of an inexorable necessity which rendered the bestowal of His mercy impos-

sible on any other terms, freely gave up His Son to die upon the Cross.

During the first stage of the Church's reflection on the meaning of the Cross, the secret predominating influence was the shock of horror caused by the transcendent greatness of the crime of man. During the second stage, the secret predominating influence was the sense of wondering love and gratitude caused by the recognition of the transcendent greatness of the love of God. But in neither stage was a complete view of the Cross achieved. The shock of horror expressed through the Satanic-ransom theory deepened the sense of sin and harmonised with the truth of the Coming Judgment, but the errors of the theory tended to obliterate the sense of the majesty of God and the transcendent greatness of His love. On the other hand, the sense of God's majesty and transcendent love expressed through the expiatory theory tended to awaken reverence and devotion in the Christian heart as they had never been awakened before, but the errors of the theory tended also, in the long run, to obliterate the shock of horror and the sense of the sinfulness of sin, and to shut out of sight the Truth of the Coming Judgment.

But now, if the propitiatory theory be accepted as the true explanation of the Cross, it would appear as though the Church might look forward to a new stage in her history in which the Christian heart shall be allied with and express its spiritual experiences through a purely *Christian* intellect, and be enabled to proclaim to the world the great message of the Cross unhampered by any of the pagan or Judaistic excrescences by which in the past that message has been encumbered.

In this message equal justice will be done to the man-ward and to the God-ward side of the story of the Cross. "Christ crucified *for* sinful men" will not be suffered to obliterate "Christ crucified *by* sinful men." The great obstacle to forgiveness will not be found in a just right possessed by Satan over men, nor yet in an assumed necessity for a satisfaction of retributive justice, but in the necessity that the conditions attaching to perfectly holy mercy shall be perfectly fulfilled by those to whom the mercy is shown. Thus the mercy of God will be exhibited in its spiritual beauty and preciousness and purity, freed from all taint of cheapness and of laxity. It will be shown to be such mercy as can be received only by those who are sincerely looking towards complete emancipation from the power of sin and complete fellowship with the spiritual purposes of God. But to those who receive it in sincerity the message of God's mercy in Christ will be a message that shall bow their heads in adoring awe and move their souls to their deepest depths and fill their eyes with tears of solemn joy, and abide with them all their days as a fountain of inexhaustible inspiration.

And the great glad message of mercy shall no longer obscure and cancel, but shall harmoniously go hand in hand with the great, solemn message of Judgment yet to come.

And the Scriptures shall appear before the eyes of men vested in greater and more assured authority than ever, for it will be seen that they have kept and held through all the centuries possession of higher and far more vital truth than ever was or ever can be discovered by the uttermost researches of the unaided mind of man.

The greatest victories of the Gospel of Christ are those that are still to come, for the days indeed are near which were foreshadowed by our own true poet in the lines:

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight,
We mock Thee when we do not fear,
But help Thy foolish ones to bear;
Help Thy vain worlds to bear Thy light.

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